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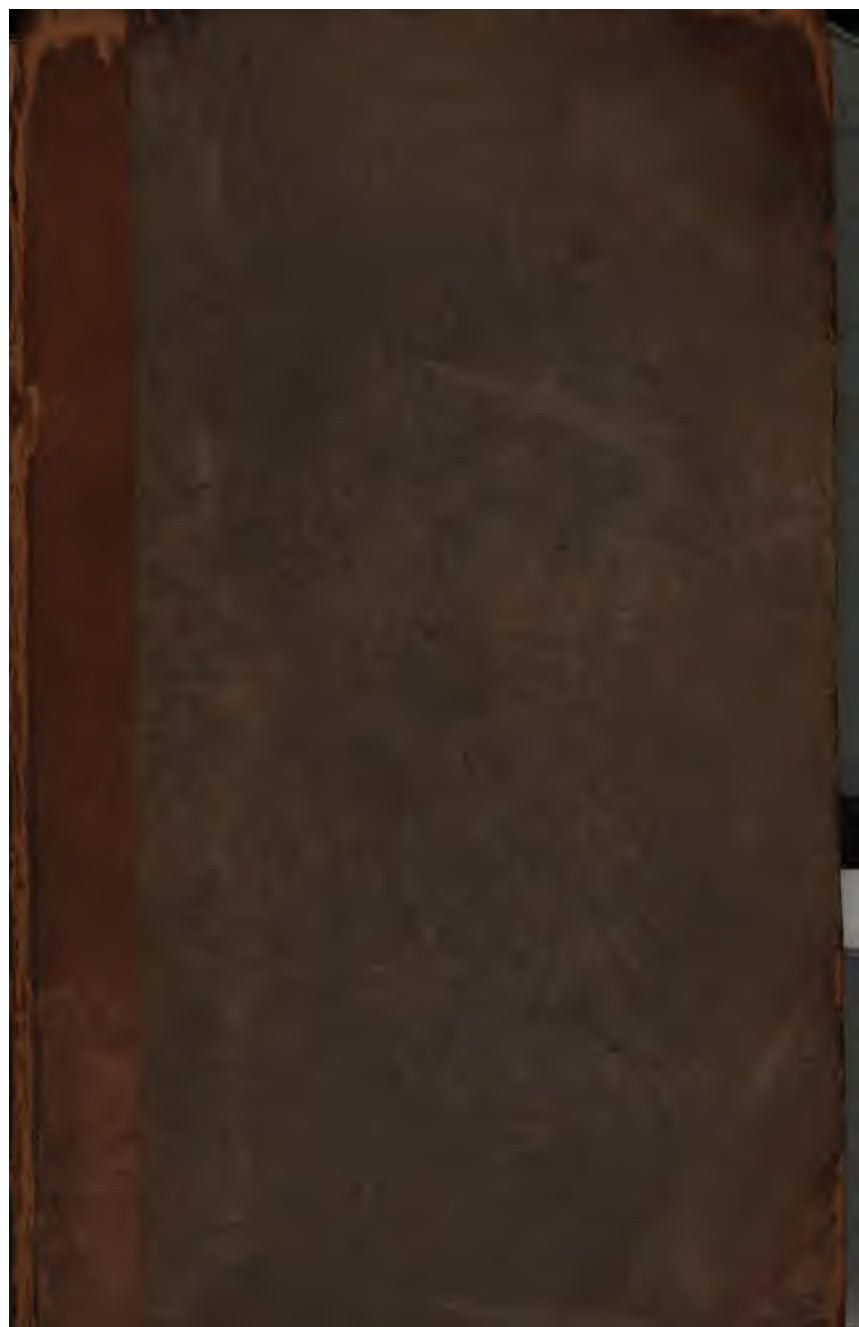
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HISTORY
AND
ADVENTURES
OF
GODFREY RANGER;

In Three Volumes.

BY D. W. PAYNTER.

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.

Horace.

Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.

Virgil. Æneid 1.

VOL. I

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THE
PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

IN this unparalleled age of wisdom, there are such incredible numbers of poor devils who are afflicted with the *scrawling typhodes*, or, as Juvenal more aptly terms it, *Scribendi cacoethes*, that to attempt the cure of it, would be just as ridiculous, as to attempt to rid the sea of its squamous inhabitants, or to sift the sense of one philosopher from the brains of nine thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine fools. Like the gout, it is to be found in poor as well as rich soils; and it frequently grows upon many good people to perfect inveteracy, insomuch

that the active sulphur of criticism is of no more service to them, than a dissertation on fortitude is to the man who is dying of hunger, or a soothing speech to a raging lunatic. But it is rather remarkable, that among the multitude of those who are said to be possessed with this unaccountable distemper, there are some that are merely sick in idea, and so beat and rack their unfortunate heads, just for beating and racking's sake.

To what degree the author of these sheets is plagued with it, I cannot, with strict accuracy, tell; nor will I hazard the assertion, that he has not the power in his own hands to effect the cure of himself. But let us drop the allegory, and proceed in plain English.

The most feeble, pithless, and imma-

terial chapters in the whole work, are, in my judgment at least, the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth of volume first; but even those, a juvenile reader, I apprehend, will peruse with some satisfaction. 'Tis plain our author hath written hastily; and, if I am not mistaken, in some places carelessly. However, not to give the fastidious hyper a handle to find fault with him, I shall forbear all further unfavourable remarks, and leave the candid reader to judge for himself. If I were not nearly interested, as being the Publisher, I might possibly speak a few words in his praise; but, as a just and benevolent mind never fails to meet with its reward in the end, so neither does true merit, in any particular branch of writing, lie long undiscovered, though, by the bye, the world is generally very shy in giving an author full credit for his

performances, till death hath tripped up his heels.

The real motive, or motives, of his sitting down to write the following narration of his own several adventures, &c. he acquaints us with at the opening of the second volume, which I beg leave in this place to transcribe.

“ Lest it should be thought,” says he, “ that I am one of those short-sighted creatures who expect, by making histories of their youthful transactions and exploits, to get themselves talked about, and set down for devilish clever fellows, it will be highly meet, necessary, and expedient for me to declare, (and I hope my reader will not be so ill-mannered as to tell me I lie) that when I set about the writing of the first volume of these

my memoirs, I neither hankered after fame nor *lucre*, but was swayed principally by the thought of notifying my innumerable inconsistencies, in order that those who have a taint of profligacy in their compositions, might take profit; and those who are fond of light reading, reap amusement from them. Such was then, and such is still my design. I had likewise some few fears that my memory was not so good as it ought to be, on which account I was determined to put it, by this means, to the test; and, to my unspeakable satisfaction (for it is a great comfort to have a clear remembrance of past events,) I find that I have not, so far at least, any occasion to complain of it."

Should the diving and judicious part of the world disapprove the work, my taste

will, doubtless, be called in question : nay, perhaps, some worthy gentlemen will make free to sentence me an incorrigible ass ! Why, let them e'en fix what dirty title they like upon me ; at the very worst, I can but chew the cud of vexation, and pine away my life in fretting and fuming. But there is *a certain order* of critics whose bad word would depress me as little, as their good one would please me, because I am pretty sensible, that their gracious favour, like a physician or counsellor's advice, may, at any time, be procured by dint of pelf.

I do not know that I am ever put so much out of humour, as when I hear a person run down a book, and say, without a why or a wherefore, that it is not worth reading ; especially when he adds, by way of *demonstration*, " Oh, sir, 'tis d—n'd

trash!—nonsense—stuff—scandalous stuff!—dross—soup-meagre—porridge—complete porridge, by G—!" This is one way of proving an author a blockhead, most truly; and a way which, I am afraid, (pitiful as it is) a good many of our modern judges do frequently strike into.

It is a maxim with me, always to look a work through and through, before I venture to pass my opinion upon it. If it please me, I endeavour to shew the reason, or reasons, of its doing so: if it be grating to me, I also, to the best of my discernment, point out its principal incongruences and defects. To confess the truth, I would not put implicit confidence in the word of any connoisseur, though he were esteemed a second *Longinus*; and unless my own judgment told me that a book was futile, no man's opinion in the

world should influence me to condemn it. But not to detain thee, reader, with argument, I shall only add, in the words of the great satirist whom I have above quoted—

Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.

And now thou mayst enter the easy vehicle as soon as thou thinkst proper, and I wish thee a pleasant journey with all my heart.

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*Which boasts two or three as extra-
ordinary and heroic Adventures
as are to be met with in any book
that hath made its appearance in
the Christian Æra, not excepting*



THE
HISTORY
OF
GODFREY RANGER.

CHAP. I.

The Exordium.

AN old author remarks, that the proverb; "*he has brought his pigs to a fair market,*" has its foundation in this circumstance. In those days, when, as Sir Thomas Smith observes, "*pigs were good cheap,*" two persons joined their full stocks of cash to buy a sucker; towards which one contributed four-pence, and the other two-pence; the same proportions were observed

in respect to the expences of keeping and feeding him ; and when he had increased to four times his first weight, and consequently four times his first value, the pig was killed, cut up, and divided ; but being kept and fed in the sty of the merchant who had paid four-pence, he insisted, that the whole pig, except a two-penny cut for his chapman-partner, belonged to him, and so it was agreed. And, note, the two-penny dealer got nothing by the bargain, or for his trouble of feeding and taking care of the pig the six weekly working-days, except the casual profits that arose from the dung.

Keep thy laughing muscles straight, reader, I charge thee, and neither fleer, chuckle, or suffer thy lungs to mimic the boisterous music of a hair-brained colt ; for though this tale of a pig, or tale of a tub, may seem somewhat awkward and out of place at the beginning of a discourse ; yet, when thou art let into the grand drift of it, thou wilt quickly per-

ceive, and as readily acknowledge, that I could not possibly have hit upon a happier one for the introduction of the subject I am about to handle, or one that is better suited to bring thee to the right understanding of those terms, on which I could heartily wish thee to travel with me.

To say the truth, a little, turbulent, conceited jackanapes, commonly called Genius, (do not suppose that I am going to give thee a touch of egotism, for there are dull Geniuses as well as bright ones) a restless jackanapes, I say, under the above appellation, who lives rent-free in that part of my *caput* which is denominated the scull, has been constantly importuning me, for some time past, to help him with my friendly hand, in putting the wild-goose-schemes and whimsies which he hath brooded over and hatched with an infinite deal of pains, trouble, difficulty, and toil, into sound English prose, upon metamorphosed rags, usually called paper,

in order that they might be committed to the republic of *unpensioned readers*.

Tired out with his urgent petitions, but more especially at the instance of that plausible, high-crested, and meddling counsellor, who bears the name of Vanity, I judged it meet, for the sake of quietness, to parley ; and though I saw the business to the bottom, and looked upon it, in my sober prudence and discernment, to be worse than unpromising, I ventured to strike a bargain with this troublesome projector ; and the conditions agreed upon were precisely these.—First, That I should procure, with all possible dispatch, a suitable quantity of pen, ink, and paper ; on the latter of which I should set down, in legible characters, whatsoever the said Genius ordered and devised. Secondly, that whenever the said Genius flagged, or felt inclined to take a nap, I should not, by any means, scruple to indulge him ; for that he would rather do no work at all than be driven to it.

To say the truth, modesty is an article which is but seldom dreamed of; and, I fear, it will always cut as poor a figure in the character of an author, as it does in the present system of morality.

Genius, for his part, will be on the right side of the question let what will happen. If he meet with that degree of praise and encouragement which he hath promised himself, and which, I apprehend, is not very small, his ambitious ends will be answered to his heart's wish; and I shall be as small a gainer by the bargain as the two-penny swine-chapman was by his; except, indeed, with respect to the *dung*.*

* The Publisher of these sheets being a little puzzled about the tendency of the word *dung*, applied to the Author, in a very earnest manner, to unriddle it for him; but he shook his head, and declared, with much gravity, though not without sputtering, that he had really forgot what he meant by it himself. The Publisher was both vexed and surprised at this unaccountable answer; but as he hath great readiness of mind, *when he is put to a shift*, he soon bethought him of a wise and learned

On the other hand, if his sage production bring shoals of hyper-critics upon his back, and they cry him down with all the might of their wonted scurrility and abuse; I say, if this were to fall out, Genius, after he had bit his lip a little, would be

Annotator, who lived a few doors from him, and with whom he had some slight acquaintance. To this gentleman he repaired, and told him his business without reserve. Upon which the Annotator, after saying, with a smile of superiority, that he did him great honour, gave his beard a *philosophical stroke*,—hem'd thrice,—caught hold of the book, which he opened in a way that unbookish fingers are incapable of executing; and as soon as he had read over the previous matter, and given the word itself a close survey, or rather scrutiny, which cost him twenty-five minutes by the clock, he protested, that it was the most gloomy, dark, and mysterious term he had ever met with in the whole course of his reading; but that his private opinion was, that it meant the money arising from the sale of the work. He added, that if he had put the right construction upon it, the term was not only hoggish, but unjustifiable; for, though he had read many ancient authors who called money dross, trash, &c. he never before heard of a modern philosopher, who had the heart to reckon it *dung*, or the conscience to call it so.

Genius still, in his own conceit ; while I, mad truckling gull, stood smarting under the tearing lash of sarcastic ridicule.

Now, reader, have I laid my case before thee, in a well-conceived allegory ; and if thou hast an atom of pity in thy composition, thou wilt not fail, should our vehicle, when it is passing over a rough pavement, or through an uneven road, happen to jolt, to keep thy temper. If, indeed, thou shouldst be thrown from thy seat, or so shaken and jogged, that thy sides are attacked with the sharp stitches of disappointment, a pish, or a psha, will not be out of the way ; for the greatest philosophers in the world are not at all times capable of keeping their chagrin to themselves. In short, if the neck of thy patience should unfortunately be broken before we get to the end of our journey, I pray thee rail not at the poor driver,—vent not thy chafe against him ; but rather curse his madcap-employer, Genius. In fact, he has played me so scurvy and

abominable a trick, in inveigling
into this musty, hackneyed, and,
aught I know, unprofitable business, that
I care not much whether thou dost load
him with encomiums or wishest him at the
very devil.

CHAP. II.

*Giving a concise account of my parentage
and birth.*

WITHOUT greasing the wheels of my history with further preamble, prelude, or preface, I shall put it in motion at once ; trusting that it will, if it be only for the diversity of incidents it contains, run so as to afford amusement, even to the most splenetic reader.

My grandfather was a reputable attorney, who practiced for more than forty successive years in a large commercial town in Lancashire. Being particularly partial to his profession, he soon raised himself to eminence ; and by his uncommon assiduity, and æconomical mode of house-keeping, amassed as much wealth, as enabled him to purchase an estate of near five hundred acres, in the fertile county of Chester ; to which, in the sixty-

eighth year of his age, he retired, to the no small regret of his clients: for, notwithstanding the singular grudge that people in general bear to lawyers, a syllable of disrespect uttered against him, was counted almost as bad as treason.

His distributions to the deserving poor being remarkably liberal, he was emphatically styled their good patron: and he was no less noted for his charity, than he was for his equity, square-dealing, and thorough conception of the law. In short, he was universally admired and beloved, and had every one's good word: yet these qualities, excellent as they are, were blended with a frailty, to which I may justly impute many of the strange disasters that have befallen me. This was nothing more or less than family-pride,—a pride, reader, which, if not kept under due restriction, renders the owner of it really contemptible. To such a pitch had it worked itself in my grandsire's brain, that he positively looked upon the most illustrious families

to be inferior to his own. As he seldom went from home, unless on urgent occasions, all his leisure hours were spent over a voluminous folio of heraldry ; on which, though it was but in a tattered plight, he set great value ; nay, would not have exchanged it, as I have been informed, for the best library in Christendom.

He was upwards of forty when he married ; and a number of years expired, without any signs of his yoke-fellow's conceiving, which made him not a little uneasy : however, she at last blessed him with a fine boy ; but quitting her bed afterwards, rather prematurely, she took cold, and was shortly attacked by a malignant fever, which forced her to yield her life. Now that he had lost his helpmate, his little son, my unfortunate parent, became the darling of his soul ; consequently, no expence was spared in forwarding his education. The older he grew, the more he was indulged and caressed. In a word, my father, at the

age of twenty, having completed his studies, accompanied the old gentleman to the spot I have above mentioned; where they had not lived more than ten months, before he fell desperately in love with the daughter of a low-born, though venerable pastor, who then held the curacy of —, which brought him in annually, exactly forty-six pounds. Finding her, by dint of courtship, to possess an amiable, as well as virtuous disposition, he, with much importunity, obtained the pious man's consent, and clandestinely took her to wife.

An intercourse of love was carried on for some months, without being discerned by the prying argus of suspicion; but, unfortunately, she, my mother, became pregnant, which sealed the destiny of them both. Some officious tattler making my grandfather acquainted with the whole affair, all was confusion; and the fire-brand of domestic strife began to blaze with unextinguishable fury. In vain did

my father weep and implore forgiveness : In vain did he promise future obedience : the old man stormed like a madman ; and in the zenith of his romantic indignation, arrogantly exclaimed—" Was it for this, thou treacherous son, that I reared thee ? To mingle the blood of a noble and ancient lineage with dross ! the scum of the earth ! Marry a plebian ! Low minded wretch ! but from this moment, I shake thee from my heart, and abandon thee to beggary and ruin." And he concluded with telling him, that he must, that very instant, quit the house. My father, being naturally of a passionate turn, was enraged past description, and immediately withdrew. On communicating to his beloved consort, and her aged father, the inhuman treatment he had met with, their affliction was unbounded. As for my mother, it bore so heavily upon her, that she was instantly seized with the racking pains of labour ; and, in a few hours, the midwife brought me safe into the world. I was but a puny child, on account of my seeing the light a month

or six weeks before I ought to have done ; though I turned out to be a very robust boy, as will appear in the sequel.

During the confinement of his mate, my father frequently deliberated with himself, what course he should pursue, in order to avoid the gruff cloud that seemed ready to deluge their remaining peace. But, as it is totally impossible for a man whose ideas are incumbered with dejection and grief, to form any reasonable or steady plans, his determinations were never conclusive. He made repeated efforts to effect an interview with the old 'squire, both by going to his mansion in person, and by letter ; but without success ; the servants always telling him, that their master had peremptorily ordered them not to permit him to come within his threshold ; and that they must either obey, or run the risk of losing their places, which they had no mind to do ; therefore begged he would peaceably begone, and not put them to the necessity of using

force. The impudence of these ungrateful menials, added to the inflexibility of his incompassionate father, excited in him so much disgust, that he resolved rather to perish, than again ask admittance. Yet, he evidently saw that his present inactive life would, by no means, answer; for the good old curate's half-year's stipend, which had but lately been received, was pretty nearly expended.

In this exigence, he wrote to several of his nearest relations; earnestly entreating them, after having described his situation, to send him speedy succour, and also to endeavour to procure him employment; but, instead of pity and relief, he received only mortifying gibes and reproaches; such as, 'You're a mighty pretty fellow!—An accomplished gentleman!—An infamous vagabond!—Deserve to be tied to a whipping-post!' And thus did his sorrow daily gather strength.

The thoughts of having been so long a burden to his benevolent and only stay on earth, sat so heavy upon his spirits, that he became, in a manner, distracted; and would often, as if he had been guilty of some heinous offence, upbraid himself with the names of wretch, and villain, and many others, equally, if not more reproachful.

My mother, who was rather of a delicate constitution, soon and forcibly felt the effects of despondency, by a total loss of appetite, which continued for near a fortnight. But, for my own share, I suppose I never made the least complaint, except when I was taken from the breast abruptly.

My reverend grandfather, without considering his own calamitous state, was, like a true patriarch, continually administering the milky balm of comfort, and chiding them, though in gentle terms, for not placing a more stedfast reliance in

the mercies of the great and omniscient director of the universe. Yet, although his arguments were invariably founded on the principles of judgment, prudence, piety, and truth, and delivered in a pathetic and philosophical manner, they tended rather to aggravate, than assuage, their despair.

CHAP. III.

Containing matter no less interesting.

THROUGH what channel the circumstances I have related, and am about to relate, concerning my parents, came to my knowledge, I shall not fail, in seasonable time, to shew ; but, for the present, it will be as well to keep the Reader in ignorance.

Being reduced to their last guinea, and having no one to look up to for more, when that should be gone, my father, in the agonies of his despair, offered himself to a certain opulent farmer, who, having lately dismissed his cowman, wanted one in his stead. But, before they hit upon terms, the keeper of a small ale-house, in the neighbourhood, who had a high respect for the old curate, on account of some little service which he had formerly done him, came, one day, in a great hurry, to acquaint them that there was then in

his house a renowned schoolmaster from Lincoln, on his road to Chester, who said he was in immediate want of an usher. The joy which this information occasioned, I shall not pretend to describe, as it may with greater accuracy be conceived. Suffice it to say, my father, flushed with the hope of being chosen, allowed not his intelligencer time to recover his breath, but hurried him away in a moment: and, as luck would have it, they arrived at the cottage just as the gentleman had mounted his horse to depart.

On the landlord's giving him to understand, that he had brought to him a young man who might very well suit his purpose, he instantly alighted, and very obligingly said, that he should have no objections to engage a person of his recommendation, provided he bore a fair character, and was competently qualified for the task. His voice being familiar to my father, he eyed him from top to toe with great attentiveness, and soon recollected him to be

one of his old preceptors, from whom he had experienced, when at school, the most tender indulgence, and to whose care he principally owed his literary attainments. Transported with this discovery, he directly went up to him ; and without troubling his head with ceremony, offered him his hand. The worthy pedagogue, surprised to see so much freedom in one whom he supposed to be an entire stranger, (for my father had let his beard grow to an unusual length, which greatly disfigured him) drew back ; but as soon as he declared his name, he was ready to devour him.

After some cordial conversation, to and fro, Mr. Gilbert Prosody, for that was his name, eagerly interrogated my father respecting his misfortunes ; the cause of which when he had learned, he shed abundance of tears, and inveighed against the cruelty of parents, with a vehemence hardly to be described. He told my father he had, that very morning, rode several miles

out of his way, in order to pay his devoirs to him and his begetter ; being in hopes, as he was entirely ignorant of what had happened, of finding their dwelling almost a paradise. " I was received," continued he, " by the old gentleman, your father, with exceeding courtesy. He was in amazingly good spirits, and was not, as I thought, quite so imperious as he was wont to be. But when I made enquiries about you he changed colour, and was seized with a violent trembling ; which led me to surmise that you had met with some shocking accident or other ; I therefore urged him again ; but, instead of satisfying me, he completely evaded my question, and began to talk of old affairs : so I concluded all things were not taking a right course.

Perceiving my earnestness had thrown his blood into a fermentation that would not easily be cooled, (for though he endeavoured to conceal his confusion, it was evident both in his countenance and dis-

course) I took my leave; extremely ill mortified I had not seen you, and wondering, in my own mind, what could be the matter. After I had pondered upon it for some time, I reached this house, which I entered, merely to recreate myself with a pipe and a pot of beer, and fell into conversation with one of the company, who was an itinerant pedlar. Happening to mention that I was of the scholastic calling, and that I stood much in need of an assistant, the keeper of the house, hearing what I said, took his hat, and approaching me, requested I would not go until he returned; for that he could, most probably, find a person to my liking. Admiring his honest bluntness, and as there appeared a deal of goodness and humility in his looks, I readily assented, and away he went. But being soon after left by myself, my patience grew stale; so that I was just upon the point of breaking my promise, and betaking myself away: and had you been a few minutes longer, the good man's

intention to serve you would have proved wholly abortive."

This said, he took my father affectionately by the hand, and bade him be of good cheer; assuring him, at the same time, that whilst he himself had a penny, he should never want: and therewith presented him with a leathern purse, containing eleven guineas in gold, and some silver. Overcome with this extraordinary act of humanity, he was, for a considerable time, unable to reply; but, at length, recovering himself, he gave a loose to a language which true gratitude alone can speak; and which only those who are, or have been, under its guidance, can form the least conception of.

My father desired him to bear him company home, but he begged to be excused, telling him, the business he was then going upon, was of such a nature, as demanded the strictest diligence; and that he must be in the city that evening,

without fail. "However," added he, "I believe I shall not be kept there more than one day, at the expiration of which I shall return, and wait upon you, for the purpose of devising some proper measures, with regard to your future establishment." They now tenderly embraced each other, and parted.

So much was my father taken up with his good fortune, and so impatient to let his family know it, that he flew home like an arrow from a bow, and came before them well-nigh breathless. With a countenance full of wild delight, he threw the purse into my mother's lap; at the sight of which, (judging, from his uncouth appearance, that he had obtained it by means detrimental to his own honour, and contrary to the laws of the land) she turned pale and wept. My grandfather seemed to be possessed with the same notion; for he firmly vowed, he would rather starve, than eat the bread of disgrace; and warmly enjoined him to make speedy.

restitution. But their ill-grounded apprehensions and doubts he soon converted into the most perfect satisfaction and pleasure; and they, a thousand times, blessed God and their benefactor.

Their cottage was no longer the haunt of misery and despair: no sighs or lamentations were now to be heard; no tears to be seen, or any other signs of grief; but all was serenity, cheerfulness, and love.

My father having a due sense of the obligation he was under to the honest alvender, begged his acceptance of a couple of guineas; but the poor fellow refused taking them; protesting, that if he had done him a service, it was not with the mercenary view of being rewarded; neither would he receive a farthing. I mention this, as being a rare instance of pure disinterestedness.

The next day but one, Mr. Prosody arrived, agreeably to his word; and was,

of course, welcomed with smiles of joy and gratitude; and they all strove which could shew him the most esteem. He approved my father's choice, and was mighty well pleased with the old pastor, to whose doctrine he listened with peculiar attention; and dandled me upon his knee, with all the fondness imaginable.


He proposed, that my parents should accompany him to Lincoln; that my father should assist in his school; and that they should have the run of his house, till something more advantageous fell out. This was an offer not to be rejected by people in their deplorable situation; they therefore, with many warm expressions of gratitude, eagerly embraced it. Before they set off, my grandfather thought it would not be amiss once more to try the old squire: Mr. Prosody coincided with him; but my father and mother were quite against it; alledging, that it would be much better to leave him to his own conscience, which would, ere long, convince

him of the cruelty and absurdity of his caprice, and chastise him accordingly: whereas, if he was plagued with too much entreaty, his resentment might probably increase, and he would consequently remain inexorable. However, they at last submitted to the persuasions of their friends; and the good old curate was appointed ambassador. But he came back as he went; the door being shut in his face by a skipping footman, who swore, without paying the least regard either to his function or his grey hairs, that if he came there again, he should, most assuredly, bestow on him a sound horse-whipping.

It was not without great difficulty that they restrained my father from resenting this gross insult: he was exasperated to such a degree, that if they had not held him down in his chair, he certainly would have made the fellow smart for his pains: and, indeed, it would have been no more than right, if he had beaten him to mummy.

Having got every thing in readiness for their departure, Mr. Prosody pressed upon my grandfather a bill to the amount of fifteen pounds, and told him to be sure to apply to him for more, whenever he was low in pocket: and moreover, said he had some interest with the Bishop of Lincoln, which he should opportunely exert in his behalf. They now bade the worthy old man farewell, and, with full hearts, bent their course towards Namptwich, which was the first market-town in their way; and which they arrived at in a few hours. Here Mr. Prosody left his horse, with orders for it to be sent after him, and hired a chaise; which carried them, in due time, to their journey's end.

As soon as they were properly settled, their first care was to have me christened, which was accordingly done; and I was called Godfrey, after my father. The reader may perhaps think it strange, my grandfather being a clergyman, that this



rite was not performed before ; but when he considers the load that was continually upon their minds, his wonder will, or at least ought, immediately to cease.

From the manner in which my father had lived, it is not to be supposed that the identity and bustle of a school was very agreeable to him at first ; but as perseverance infallibly crushes the most obstinate difficulties, and renders the most irksome occupations in some measure pleasing, his aversion to it gradually decreased ; and he passed on his time in a very contented manner. My mother would have been equally as happy, had not the thoughts of being absent from her venerable parent sometimes ruffled her ; but, on the whole, she was very easy. Nor did their excellent supporter tire of his liberality ; his goodness was, in a manner, unlimited ; and if he had been in affluent circumstances (but he had nothing to depend upon, save his school, and a small farm that lay in Staffordshire) it is impos-

sible to tell what he would have done for them. I verily believe, from what I have since heard him say, that he would willingly have sacrificed his existence for the completion of their felicity.

Before they had been stationed in this place a year, it happened that several distinguished merchants from Liverpool, came over upon business ; some of whom Mr. Prosody well knew ; and being much respected by them, they called at his house, and insisted upon his going with them to the inn where they put up, in order, as they said, to drink a cheerful glass. And, indeed, it was a cheerful glass ; for they sent him home in a very merry mood. He sung again ; and alternately kissing my parents, said, that by God's help, he could now do great things for them. Little dreaming that any thing relating to themselves had passed between him and the merchants, they paid no heed to what he said, attributing it to the fumes of liquor, but conveyed

him to bed. The following morning, however, he roused my father by the first crow of the cock, and taking him into his closet, addressed him after this manner—
“My behaviour, last night, my good friend, was enough to make you believe that I had completely drowned my reason; but, I assure you, my mirth, extravagant as it was, did not proceed wholly from a wine-drenched fancy; it was partly owing to the satisfaction and joy I felt in being again able to serve you. To be explicit with you, Providence has put it in my power to help you to a genteel, as well as lucrative employment, in which you will be perfectly your own master; and by which, if you are careful, you may get, in a few years, that which will maintain you, and whatever family you may have, comfortably. Three of the merchants whom I supped with last night, are men of the best repute; and carry on a very extensive trade both at home and abroad. Our conversation being chiefly on commerce, they enquired, if I

knew any respectable person who wanted a good post? I answered in the affirmative; and on asking the nature and extent thereof, they told me, it was to supply the place of a gentleman lately deceased, who conducted matters for them in Portugal, such as paying and receiving considerable sums of money; to whom they allowed four hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and a house rent-free. If it be not suitable to your inclination, my friend, I would not have you enter into it on any account: but, upon my word, such favourable situations are not every day to be met with. There are thousands, at this moment, who would give their ears to stand so fair a chance of doing well. However, you had better consider about it, and let me know your determination as soon as possible; for, as the gentlemen intend leaving town this evening, there is no time to be lost."

My father, without the least hesitation, declared, that it was a place which per-

fectly agreed with his disposition ; but that before he resolved, he would hear what my mother said. To avoid prolixity, I shall only add, that it met with her full approbation. He went to the merchants ; was immediately fixed upon ; and, in three days' time, having taken an affectionate farewell of all they knew, they set out for Liverpool ; leaving me under the sole care and protection of their incomparable friend, Mr. Prosody, according to his earnest desire.

CHAP. IV.

Which boasts two or three as extraordinary and heroic adventures, as are to be met with in any book that hath made its appearance in the Christian Æra, not excepting the renowned History of Jack the Giant-Killer.

I HAVE somewhere, in the course of my reading, met with an account of a certain ancient metaphysician, who was so austere a pedant, that he was always in pain, when he heard any thing read that had not, for its characteristic qualities, deep erudition, abstruse thought, and strong energetic language. And he was equally remarkable for his bursts of indignation, when any person said or did what he fancied a silly, childish, or stupid thing, in his presence. This profound and cynical schoolman (as the story runs) was walking, one day, by a noted seminary, when his eye accidentally caught two st.

dents very busily engaged in a game, which, though it was at once manly and toilsome, he thought unpardonably inconsistent with their order. Inflamed with anger and contempt, for his profundity had not the least particle of discretion or prudence in it, he broke in upon them forthwith ; and without any preface, fell a drubbing them both with his cane. He dealt out his blows so handsomely, that one of the scholars ran off, if I may use a plebeian phrase, like a scalded cock ; but the other, who had somewhat more mettle in him, stood his ground ; and falling in with the bedlamite philosopher, quickly wrested the cane out of his hand, and broke it in twain. "I will not take the trouble, old gentleman," said the young spark, with the coolest temperance, "to pay you back in your own coin ; but you may take it for granted, that you will not come off so well in all such cases. Your learning, which is founded on no other basis but that of stupidity, renders you the most intolerable being in society.

Pray, what sort of a rascal would you take me to be, if I broke your head, for letting fall a scholastic saying that I did not comprehend?" The sage frowned, and turned upon his heel; but laid the rebuke so heavily to mind, that he took good care never to meddle with any one again, as long as he lived.

The end of my relating this anecdote is, to prevent such gentlemen as profess themselves *bottomless* scholars, that is to say, lovers of *solid* pedantry, and downright enemies to every thing that is light and whimsical, from having any thing to do with this my history. If any who are of this cast of mind, have had the patience to run over the two preceding chapters, I would advise them not to venture upon another, or they may possibly meet with matters that will give them terrible disgust; insomuch, that, for aught I know, they will demolish the book with their claws; or, what is worse, throw it into the fire, and perhaps set the chimney in

a blaze ; for which, if they are not great favourites with fortune, they will be fined in the sum of five shillings. I hint this by way of *caution* ; for 'twould be pity that a poor man should pay a crown, for venting his *wrath* upon a book that had offended him.

My guardian had a female relation, of the name of Racy, who lived in a little village about twelve miles remote from Lincoln. Her late husband (for she was a widow, and had been so nearly eight years,) was a blunt plodding tradesman, of excellent character, and sprung from a very creditable family ; but being brought to a low pass, by a series of losses, losses that were irreparable, he died of a broken heart. After his debts were all paid, there was a surplus of three hundred pounds ; with which, by the advice of some friends, she purchased an annuity, and removed into the country. To this lady was I sent, immediately after the departure of my parents, and continued with her till I was fit

for the tuition of Mr. Prosody. She was a very motherly woman, and took such pains with me, that at seven I could read the most difficult chapter in the Bible ; and although I many times did things for which I richly deserved a severe flogging, as the reader will see, she never so much as gave me a blow, but was content with telling me, that I must be a good boy ; for that I should be fetched away, some time or other, by a gentleman in a large wig, (meaning Mr. Prosody,) who would be very angry, if he found me naughty. This was certain to curb me a little, if nothing else would ; for I did not like the idea of parting with my mammy, as I called her. She treated me so kindly, and was always so indulgent, that I regarded her equally as much as I could have done, if she had been my real mother : indeed, I actually thought she had been so, till the day before I left her.

I recollect, as I was one day playing with some children in the lane, I saw, at

a distance, an old man in a white bushy wig walking towards us. My little heart took the alarm in a moment; and I ran home as fast as my legs could carry me. "Oh, mammy, mammy!" said I to Mrs. Bacy, who sat knitting at the door; "here is the ugly old fellow in the nasty wig." "Impossible, child!" cried she, in some surprise; "It cannot be Mr. Prosody!" "Oh yes;" returned I; "it is the ugly old fellow himself." "Fie, Godfrey!" cried she; "you must not call him such names as those. He is a very good gentleman my love; and if you behave yourself, well, he will make a little man of you." "Oh mammy," answered I, crying very hard; "do not let him take me! He is such a cross-looking old man, and carries such a big stick in his hand, that I am sure he will beat me."

I had no sooner spoken this, than the supposed Mr. Prosody appeared in sight, and called out to my foster-dam, to know if she wanted any of his *invaluables*. She

told him, no : so he wished 'her a good morning, and trudged on. He was one of those right honourable personages, about whom the ducks make such an intolerable noise, and who travel about the country crying up and vending their stupendous nostrums.

As soon as I was recovered of my fright, she asked me what I would have done, if he had proved to be the true person ? "Why mammy," said I, quavering my fists ; "if he had offered to take me from you, I would have fought with him." "What !" cried she ; "with such a stout man as that my Godfrey ?" "Yes ;" answered I, lustily ; "if he had been as strong as that very strong man, whom I read about, the other day, in the Bible, (meaning Samson) and high as yonder steeple, (pointing towards the church) I would have fought him, before he should have taken me from my dear mammy, that's what I would." I spoke this with so much warmth, that she caught me in

her arms in an ecstasy of delight; and after she had half stifled me with kisses, cried—"God in heaven bless thee, my little angel!" I acquaint the reader with this, because it is the remotest incident that falls within my remembrance; else 'tis possible I should not have made the slightest mention of it.

Early one morning in the month of October, 1766, a large pack of hounds, followed by a great rabble, passed by the house, in pursuit of a fox. The music of their jovial halloos striking my ears, I ran out of doors, and must needs join them; but I met with but a very coarse reception. The huntsman scourged me with his whip most unmercifully, crying, "Get home, thou young bastard, or I'll flay thee alive!" Some threatened to throw me to the dogs; others to castrate me: in short, they all seemed determined to drive me back; yet follow I would, in spite of their menaces; and I climbed over hedge and gate, for a while, with as good heart as the best

of them. But my legs, on a sudden, failed me; I fell exhausted on the ground; and lay, for the space of ten minutes, gasping for breath. When I got up, I began to look about me with some concern; for I found I was in the middle of a large heath. I could see neither house nor hut: the hunters were quite out of hearing; and, what was worse, my belly cried "cupboard!" In the bitterness of my grief, I ran first one way, then another; and hallooed with all the might of my lungs: but 'twas all to no purpose; I could find no pathway; and my cries were only answered by the cackling of a flock of geese, that were grazing on the moor.

I continued in this pitiable situation nearly an hour; when, to my inexpressible joy, I descried a woman in a scarlet cloak riding along the edge of the common. As she went on but slowly, I was not long before I got within ear-shot of her; and desiring her to stop, she checked her horse, and told me to make haste, for

that she was in a hurry to get to market. As soon as I came up to her, I burst into a flood of tears, and asked her the road to the village where I lived. "Bless me, child," cried she, "how came you hither?" I told her I had followed the hounds. "The hounds?" echoed she; "La, child, you should never go after dogs! But whose little boy are you, pray?" I sharply answered, "My mammy's." "Tut, tut, I know that," said she, peevishly; "but what is your mammy's name?" I told her, Racy. "Racy!" cried she, appearing somewhat out of order; "Oh, oh—is it so?—I know madam Racy well enough; and seeing thou art a brat of her's, thou mayest tarry where thou art for me." So saying, she gave me an angry look, switched her horse, and trotted briskly away.

Young as I was, this piece of cruelty touched me so deeply, that I could not help saying to myself, "What can my mammy have done to this woman, that she should use me in this manner?" Af-

ter I had watched her out of sight, I pursued a track that led me off the marsh in a few minutes; and passing through two or three pasture-fields, I came to a short narrow lane, at the extremity of which there stood a farm-house. To this, as it began to rain very hard, I repaired with the utmost speed. I knocked at the door, as loud as I possibly could, for a good while; indeed, till I was almost wet to the skin: but not being able to make the people hear, and perceiving a dog-kennel, which I fancied was unoccupied, at the farther end of the yard, I thought a poor shelter would be better than none at all; so I ran directly to it: but judge of my terror and surprise, when, on putting my head into it, I saw a monstrous large mastiff, resting his huge chaps upon a piece of carrion. He hailed me with a voice that went through me; every limb of me shook as though they had been jointed with wire; and I dare say my hair stood as erect as the bristles of the wild boar, or the Echinus. However, I at last ventured

to stroke him, and call him poor fellow ! Upon doing which, he gave over growling, wagged his tail, and began to lick my hand. Encouraged with these signs of gentleness, I made bold to enter ; and the dog, to give him his due, behaved very well, and was so civil as to make room for me. I now dismissed my fears ; and by conversing—pshaw ! I mean playing with him, I found he had the mildest temper that ever dog possessed ; and we fondled, and were so free with each other, that we might have been old friends.

I do not doubt but I should have been as content here, as in a palace, if I could have got something to satisfy the wants of my stomach. Hunger is a creditor who duns without mercy, and will not be put off with a promise. *Ventre affame n'a point d'Oreilles.* I believe, even a mouldy crust, at this juncture, would have been acceptable ; nay, I may say, a dainty. Indeed, if the dog's allowance had been a little better-looking, and not

smelled quite so noisomely, I most certainly should have fallen to, without saying grace.

The kennel not being one of the largest, my knees almost touched my chin; so that I was not so much at my ease as I could have wished. In varying my position, I accidentally put my hand upon something round and soft, which, on examination, I found to be a cold boiled potato. This, though its colour was not very delicate, I demolished in a trice; and began to search among the straw for more. I was fortunate enough to find three, somewhat larger than the first, which I devoured with the same dispatch; and so keen was my appetite, that I truly think I should have *made no bones* at gorging twenty of the same kind.

My host now attacked the carrion, apparently with as much avidity as I had done the roots, and raised such a stench in the kennel, that I thought proper to

hold my nose, or else my slender meal would quickly have found its way off my stomach. When he had eaten, I suppose, till he could eat no longer, he laid his ungainly head, without asking leave, upon my lap, and fell fast asleep; and I soon followed his example; nor did I awake till about nine the next morning; and I was so ill tired, that I perhaps should not have done then, if I had not been startled by the neighing of a horse that was pasturing in a field hard by.

In a few minutes after the benevolent god had thus taken French-leave of me, as I was looking through a crevice, I perceived the door of the house open, and a man come out with a trencher of offals; who, approaching the kennel, whistled, and cried out, "Here, Fido! Fido!" The dog, pricking up his ears, and giving me a lash in the face with his tail, leaped out to him immediately, and fawned at his feet. "There, you thief!" cried the man, throwing down the meat; "there is your

breakfast." Then turning about, he began to curse some one for a lazy rascal.—
"Why, mcaster," answered a lad at some distance; "I'ze zure I does things as fust as I con." Does he d—n'd, thou Yorkshire tup!" returned the farmer, surlily; "Thou art not worth thy keep: There's Tummy Truckle now will do as much work in one day, as thou dost in two, and he is only thirteen." "Well, I can't help that," said the lad, very dryly. "By G—, but I'll make thee help it," cried the other, fiercely; "an I come to thee, thou saucy whelp!" "Na, but you wan't do sa like, I thinks!" retorted the lad, and began to sing Old Towler: but before he had made an end of the first verse, a female voice squalled out—"Silence, thou noisy hound, or I'll break every bone i' thy hide!" The boy quietly obeyed, and came up to his master with a bundle of straw upon his back, which he threw down by the kennel. "Take care, Jack," said the farmer, in a milder tone; "take care that thou clean'st the

cote as it ought to be cleaned: Thou knowst I don't like things done by halves." With these words, he retired into the house, and left Jack to speak his mind freely. "I wonder," said he, with a woful look, "what the bobs faether was thinking about, when he bun me 'prentice to such a rotten curmudgeon as that! I may rub my fingers to stumps, for aught he cares: but I'll be stewed in a p-ssp-t, ay, and burnt to charcoal, If I dan't shew un different play: I'll zee un, and all his domn'd cottle, God vorgi'e me vor zwearig; zwimming in the Red-zea, before I'll be his beecast o' burden! Wha's to do his mucky jobs, and be cuarsed to un. Does he think I'ze made of iron, or brass, or vlint? My vlesh, belike, is as scaft as his. I'd have un to knaw, I was na born to be knoacked about, and clean his dog-holes. But I can tell un, his soul will na 'scape brimstone, na more than the drunken parson's, that it will na." He would, in all human probability, have drawn out the thread of his murmurs

to a much finer length, had not his eyes caught me in the kennel. Hewas instantaneously struck with a panic, and crying out—"Lord have marey upon me!" ran hastily after his master.

Ere I had time to reflect on what I had heard and seen, the door again opened; and the whole house, both great and small, rushed out, and swarmed about the kennel like disturbed bees. "As zure as Pze here," says Jack; "Foido has worried a young gentlemon. Look, look! dan't you zee a pair o' legs?" "Whew! how the lad talks;" cries the farmer's wife, putting on her spectacles. "Icod!" cried the husband, rubbing his eyes; "I believe Jack's right though: there's a pair o' legs sure enough; or I never see'd legs before." Ay, for sartin!" exclaimed a tall meagre woman, staring, and lifting up her hands in astonishment.

After a pause of about three minutes' continuance, the good wife threw open

the gates of her eloquence, and went on after this manner: "I tell you what, husband, (but it does not signify talking, for when all saying's said, you will still be as stupid as our one-eyed ass) if you do not hang that mischievous dog, he will bring us all to the gallows, I'll eat my head if he doesn't. It was only t'other day he tore three of neighbour Mowwell's sheep, a shame to be seen: and it is but a year, come Candlemas, since he bit a large piece of flesh out of Goody Mildew's arm, and stole three-quarter's of a pound of good butter, and a loaf, out of her larder. About a month ago, he run Parson Toper's pig into the great river, where it would have been drowned, if two men had not got it out again. Another time, he overset an old woman, who was going peaceably to market, and eat all the eggs in her basket. And now, forsooth, he has kilt a Christin-mortul! may be the son of a nobleman, as like as not, who, I should not at all wonder, will have every soul of us taken up, and tried for our

lives. This comes of keeping varmant about the house, you numscull." The husbandman did not seem to regard these rebukes, but ordered the lad to pull me out. "Why, to be sure," interrupted she, "we may bury him in the dingle, and no one will be wiser." But Jack, who actually believed I was dead, stood stiff against the command, swearing he would not touch me for a golden guinea. His denial so much inflamed his master, that he laid hold of him by the collar, stripped off his jacket, and began to exercise a stick over his back with great ferocity; crying—"I'll teach thee to fly in my face, thou d—n'd ape!" His cries pierced me to the quick: I trembled for him, but more for myself; for I apprehended I should be treated in a very uncourteous manner. Full of the most strange fears, I crept out of the kennel.

The women and children flew away in confusion; the enraged farmer suspended his arm; his undutiful apprentice stopped

piping ; and they both gaped at me, as if I had been something more than human. But I quickly allayed their amazement by speaking, and telling them, in a few words, what had happened to me.

The farmer, who seemed hard of belief, asked me, if I told him a true tale ? I assured him I did. " Then," said he, " thou art a wonderful little fellow !" and patting me upon the head, desired me to follow him.

He led me directly into the house ; and after having told his wife my story, with a few decent embellishments, bade the servant give me something to eat, saying, he was sure I must be very hungry. " Something to eat !" echoed the wife, the veins swelling in her neck ; " Indeed, husband, we have no meat to give, bel! me, if our children must have their bellies filled, and that you know very well : besides, I think, for my own part, a rod about the cub's h——ch. would be of more service to him.

I wonder you an't ashamed of yourself, to encourage the young jackanapes. Od rappid it! if he was mine, I'd flog him till the blood trickled down to his heels: but you are never like any body else; you would give the bread out of your month to sarve a stranger. Wouldn't it look a deal better of you, to send the tuoad about his business, and go to your work, you great hulk?" "Prithee, let's have less of thy prating; answered he; "and give me the key of the dairy." "No, I wont;" cried she; "I tell you we have no meat to spare." "Come, come, Moll," cried he, raising his voice, "none of thy fooling! I don't like to be obstopelous, but if thou doesn't give it up without any more fuss, depend on't, I'll make thee rub thy sides." This threat had the desired effect. She produced the key in a second. The farmer took me by the hand, and crying aloud—"Come along, my lad, never mind what she says!" conducted me into a room that was well-stocked with bread, milk, cheese, pies, and other provisions.

The first thing he helped me to was a sizeable piece of pork-pie, which I reduced to nothing in a very short space. He then cut me as much bread and cheese as I could eat ; and, afterwards, poured me out a bason of rich milk ; which, when I had drank, I went back with him into the kitchen, where I got plenty of sour looks for a desert. My hunger being thus quelled, I thought it was now high time for me to be moving homewards : so I asked my kind entertainer, having previously told him where I lived, if he would be so good as put me in the direct road. “ Ay, that I will, and with a deal of pleasure, my lad ! ” said he, with a good-natured smile ; and went out of the room to fetch his hat.

No sooner had he turned his back, than the wrath which the peevish dame had, ever since his menace, contrived to stifle, burst out with a violence that did not a little disturb me. She jumped straight up from her seat, and shaking her mut-

ton-fist in my face, cried, in a low voice, in order that her husband might not hear her,—“ If ever I catch thee about these primises again, thou little stinking va-grint thou, I will not leave a whole bone i' thy skin! I' faiks, its come to who'd have thought it, that we must go and stuff thy empty guts for thee! But, I say, let me get thee in my clutches again; and, oh, thou shalt see I'll give thee something that will make thee remember me as long as——” She here stopped short, owing to the return of her spouse; who observing me tremble, called her an unfeeling fury, and took me out of the house. He very kindly went with me almost to the village, and entertained me on the road with a tale of a tub, about children running astray, and being torn to pieces by mad bulls, which made a very strong impression upon my mind; and at parting, he told me, with a serious face, to be sure and mind what I was about; for that, if I made a practice of going from home, I should, sometime or other, be

met by one of those furious animals, and devoured.

I got home without further mischief, and surprised my nurse in tears. Conscious of the imprudence I had been guilty of, I made a very foolish figure before her. But instead of chastising me with blows and reproaches, which, I think, would have been by no means improper, she fell upon my neck in a fit of excessive joy, and caressed me with more than ordinary ardor. She had sought, and made diligent enquiry for me all over the village ; but not being able to gain the least intelligence of me, she took it into her head I was kidnapped by the wandering gipsies ; and giving herself up to the most bitter reflections, passed the night without closing an eye. I just came in time, however, to prevent a letter, which she had written, from being dispatched to her relation, my worthy guardian ; in which she acquainted him with my sudden disappearance ; and describing my dress, and

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other things by which I might be known, begged he would have me advertised in the newspaper without delay.

Being anxious to know where I had been, I satisfied her in the best and faith-fullest manner I could. She was much more surprised with the conduct of the woman I met with on the common, than at the niggardliness of the farmer's wife, and bade me describe her person ; which I did, and with so much exactness, for I had taken particular notice of her, that she was persuaded she could be no other than a base swindler, whom her deceased husband had, a short time before his death, thrown into goal, for a long-standing debt of ninety pounds, which she had contracted at two several times, and which she had no intention of discharging, This, truly, was the reason why the honest woman gave me so freely the appellation of 'brat !' and left me so abruptly. But such kind of paltry revenge a worthless mind always glories in.

In a short time after this adventure, as I was amusing myself with flying a kite in a field adjoining the house, I heard, all at once, a loud squeak ; and, on turning my head, discovered a mighty regiment of half-starved water-rats, banquetting very orderly, upon some crumbs of bread that my nurse had thrown out for the poultry. They had something so terrible in their looks, that I scarce knew on whose legs I stood. My heart was in my mouth ; and letting go the string with which I held my kite, I ran trembling behind a bush of brambles. Believing that in this place I should run no hazard of receiving any molestation from them, I thought I would e'en watch them make an end of their repast ; so I crept close to the ground, and had as good a view of them as I could wish. They made so many odd gambols, that my fear imperceptibly stole away from me ; and I was forced several times, to cram my handkerchief in my mouth, to hinder me from laughing aloud. But my merriment was of short

duration ; for, happening, in my eagerness, to take hold of a branch that did a little obstruct my sight, it unexpectedly broke off, and made such a crash, that the voracious freebooters were in confusion in a trice, and tuned their throats in concert ; which affording none of the purest harmony, threw me into a worse taking, than I was in when I first beheld them. I fain would have betook myself to flight, but where to find a place of safety was the difficulty ; for they boldly retained their station, which unfortunately happened to be betwixt me and the house. Howbeit, I evacuated concealment ; and to my no small gladness, saw a pitch-fork lying upon the ground a few paces from me. With this instrument I quickly armed myself ; and summoning all the spirit I was master of, marched up to them (not doubting but that I could easily disperse them, should they be daring enough to impede my passage) in *propria persona*. But my approachment neither struck them with terror, nor caused them to alter their

position ; for, as if aware of my design, they threw up their bushy backs, darted out the fire of their fierce eyes, and, indeed, made all together such a formidable appearance, for they were in number no less than eighteen, and closely embodied, that I began to repent I had come so near them. If I made a retreat now, I fancied they would be at my heels ; so I was determined to attack them, let the consequence be what it would ; and I set to work without any more hesitation. My first and principal aim was to break them, which, by making a good round sweep with my weapon, I readily accomplished. They made repeated attempts to incorporate again ; but, in spite of their discipline, I kept them entirely asunder, and laid about me so manfully, that a few of them soon licked the dust ; by which, as my reader may imagine, I was, in no trifling measure, encouraged.

While things were going on in this prosperous manner, I felt an acute pain

in the calf of my leg, something like the pricking of pins or needles, the cause of which I was not long in discovering. One of the largest of this grim troop had got in my rear unperceived, and was charging me *tooth and nail*. Enraged to the last degree at his audacity, I seized him by the small of the back, and squeeze him till he had as little life in him as a stone. But this was not the worst; for another, equally as big and savage, impudently advanced, flew right in my face, and fastened himself on my lower lip. I bled exceeding copiously; my pain was great, but my passion greater, yet I scorned to cry out; and grasping him in the same manner I had done his grey comrade, he quitted his hold, and I cast him furiously on the ground, where he quietly breathed his last. I then, with great resolution, fell upon the rest, who had now got in very good order, and dealt death around. They squeaked most piteously, as much as to say, 'quarter? quarter?' But none would I give them, so much had they ex-

asperated me. I killed thirteen of them, and the remaining five got off, though not without feeling, in some measure, the severity of my fury and resentment.

As this action hath been reckoned, by many *feeling persons* whom I have since told it to, a plain proof of a blood-thirsty mind, I appeal to the candid reader, if he be not a professed vermin-killer, I mean one who kills for bread, for by such I should be inevitably condemned; I say, I appeal to the candid reader, if it were either a breach of *humanity*, or contrary to the *laws* of war. If he say, it were both, then I have only to offer in my defence, the old tongue-beaten adage, that "self-preservation is the first law of nature;" which, by the way, I take to be a sufficient plea.

But to proceed—Having driven the poor remains of this loathsome corps fairly out of the field, I took off my hat, and gave a shout of triumph, which presently

brought my nurse to the door, who seeing my hands and face besmeared with blood, and the dismal havoc I had made, cried out, "My God, my child is killed!" and snatching me up in her arms, carried me in the utmost agitation into the house.

She was almost frantic, although I assured I did not ail much, until she had washed off the blood; when, finding I was hurt in no other place besides my lip, which, to be sure, was very much torn and swelled, she was more easy; and after she had fomented it well with warm vinegar, she called in the neighbours, to shew them what a marvellous feat I had performed.

When they came to the field where the thirteen heroes lay weltering in their blood, they could scarcely believe their own eyes: they stood agape; and looking first at me, and then at the slaughtered food-seekers, declared, in one voice, that I had certainly been assisted in my

handiwork by some supernatural vermin-hater. One of them, a farmer, said he was inclined to believe they were part of a string which he had, a few days ago, roused out of a rick of corn, where they had been living for some weeks, at free-cost, and had done him a vast deal of other damage. Another vowed, significantly, that I ought to have a *pension*. In short, they all were pleased to pay me some compliment or other touching my prowess ; and nothing would serve them, but they must take the rats with them, in order to exhibit them about the country,

CHAP. V.

Bringing upon the table a course of un-garnished dishes, which, on account of their homeliness, may possibly offend the palate of a squeamish reader.

THE singular conquest already treated of in the foregoing chapter, gained me the esteem and good-will of the whole village, insomuch that I was every where called the brave little warrior. I was spoken of, both far and near, as a prodigy, and the youngsters of the parish contended which could get farthest into my good graces. I might justly have been likened to a great lord, who is haunted wheresoever he goes, with a numerous train of parasites.

Among the group of gentlemen who sued for my friendship and acquaintance,

was one Edward Marsh, commonly called long Ned, on account of his extraordinary height: for he was very little more than thirteen years old, and to speak within compass, was five feet four. He was such an intolerable sloven, that his stockings were always hanging over his shoes; and it was a great wonder to see him with a clean nose. His mother, who toiled hard in the wash-tub for a livelihood, could not get him to do a single thing. He was quite the upper-hand of her; and although several farmers had, at divers times, offered to take him into their service, she might as well have attempted to move a rock, as to make him go into work. If any wild prank were performed to the injury of the neighbours, Ned was sure to be at the bottom of it: in fact, mischief was his sole delight, so that he was looked upon as a very dangerous lad, particularly by those who had gardens or orchards. I know not how it was, but I took a very great liking to this arrant rough-spun, and, notwithstanding his bad name, made

him my chief associate. His temper was so remarkably good, and his whims so pleasing, that I was never content but when I was in his company; the consequence of which was, I caught all his unlucky habits, and lost, in a very short time, the tinsel of my fame.

There was another boy, a publican's son, of the name of Thomas Prow, as sly and wicked a dog as any in the county, who, being a crony of Ned's, had always a hand in our vagaries. He was nicknamed deep Tom, owing to his great artfulness; for whenever he was detected in any of his misdemeanors, he was certain to throw the blame off his own shoulders, on those of his companions, by which means he generally came off clear. He was of a bold adventurous spirit, and was constantly ranging about the country, in search of fruit-grounds, &c. &c. Indeed, to give him his due, he had such a long head, and was so excellent a contriver, that there was no doing any good without him.

My acquaintance with these two careless lads, made Mrs. Racy exceedingly unhappy, and she would often charge me to desist from going with them ; but these her mandates had always too much honey to frighten me into compliance. The childish diversions of top-whipping, marble-playing, kite-flying, hoop-bowling, &c. were now grown odious to me. I liked to be roving in the fields, playing tricks with the people, and pillaging fruit-trees, at which I was as expert a hand as my two wayward companions, although I was much younger.

It would be endless, if my memory would permit me, to recount every enterprize we went upon, I therefore shall only make known the most eminent.—Tom, in one of his roguish excursions, discovered a gentleman's orchard, inviting as it was large, which, for all it was encompassed with a thick high hedge, we were determined to plunder ; and we laid our heads together about it, I may venture to

say, with as much gravity as generals at a council of war. "If we could get a step-ladder," cried Ned, wiping his nose upon the sleeve of his coat, which always served him for a handkerchief; "if we could get a step-ladder, I'll lay a farthing to a gingerbread, we should do our business as it ought to be done." Who ever heard such a booby speak?" cried Tom, taking him up very sharply; "D'ye think as how, you fool, we can lug a ladder after us three miles, without being seen? No, no; a rope will be the thing: ask Godfrey there, if it wont?" "Why to be sure, Tom," said I; "a rope, as you say, will do best, because you know we can fling it across one of the nearest trees to the hedge, and so pull ourselves over." "That's right enough," cries Ned; "but where can we find a rope that will do?" "Why, in Bob Sheafby's barn," answered Prow, pretty quickly. "Then may the old lad singe my mother's lousy night-cap," retorted Marsh, pulling up his stockings, if I don't fetch it!" and ran

off in a wonderful great bustle. He made strides that would not have disgraced Goliath ; and the barn being at no great distance, he returned in less than five minutes ; bringing with him both the thing he went for, and three rakes, which he said would do to knock the fruit off with.

To avoid suspicion, we cautiously went, or rather sculked, a round-about way through the fields, and, at last, got to the blooming plot of ground ; the beauties of which had such a powerful effect upon our sight and smell, that it was as much as we could do to keep our teeth from watering.

When the rope was fixed, and every thing, for putting our thievish design into execution, in proper order, Tom, with all the wariness of a skilful captain, orders Ned to go round the orchard, to see that all was safe, which he does, and comes back to us quite brow-sick. " Its all over," says he, scratching his head, " we

must go back without tasting a single pear!" "Who made you so wise, Mister Soloman?" cried Tom, snapping him short: "Not taste indeed! i'cod, I'll lose my legs soouer." That you will be sure to do," cried Marsh, "if you go into that orchard, for it is full of traps." "How came you by that piece of news?" said I, not a little terrified. "Why, if you must know," answered he, "I've seen a board, with letters upon it, nailed to one of the trees." "And so; because you have seen a board," cried Prow, very stoutly, "you would have us believe the ground is full of traps? Why, you jolthead! it may only be to tell the folks that pass by, that the land is to sell. He, he, he! it is queer enough that a chap who don't know a letter in the book, no more than one's-self, should tell such a woundy clever tale: but shew us where the board is, and Godfrey will read it to us." Ned shook his head very despairingly, and led us to the place without speaking a word. And we soon found that his assertion was true;

for there actually was on the tree, in large characters, this appalling inscription,—
“*Take notice, that steel-traps, and spring-guns are set within these grounds.*”
I had no sooner read it, than he pointed exultingly at Prow, and cried out, in a very savage tone—“There, there, my lad! Will you believe me now? Didn’t I tell you it was so?” Tom now looked very blank, and said, he did not think we should have been baulked in that manner: but musing awhile, he suddenly clapped his hands together, gave a hop, skip, and jump, and exclaimed, in a transport of glee—“I have it—I have it, my boys! We are not to mind all that that there simple board says. I have hit upon a thing that will do. Let us go back to the rope, and I warrant you we wont leave the place empty-handed.” But Marsh and I stood stock still, looking very foolishly one at another. To say the truth, we were too much alarmed at the deathful words of ‘*guns and traps,*’ to be very forward in going with him: so, seeing by

our looks that we had some notion of abandoning the enterprise, he flew into a violent passion, and told us, we might go home and be hanged, for two pitiful meacock cowards as we were; that he would undertake the job himself, and not give us a taste.

Not liking our courage to be called in question, and above all, fearing that he would make his words good about the fruit, we told him we would bear a part in it with all our hearts; but declared, at the same time, that we were sadly afraid we should be disappointed. "Whew, if that be all your fear," said he, toppingly, "I will send it sharply about its business;" and as soon as we got back to the old spot, he took a knife out of his pocket, with which, having cut off about a yard of rope, he presently made two of the rakes into an excellent pair of stilts. While he was at work, we seated ourselves beside him, and watched him with just as much keenness as a surgeon's apprentice

does the amputation of a limb, or any other operation. And when he had finished, we inquired, being totally ignorant of his purpose, what use he intended to make of them ? " What use d'ye intend to make of 'em !" cried he, mimicking us. " Why you couple of shatterpated ninnies, to try the ground to be sure. I mean to walk all over the place upon them, and if there be a trap, you see, Mister Ballheads, it will nab them instead of my legs ; so then we shall know what to do. You may both stay on this side, if you like ; but mind and keep a good look out, if you don't, we are in limbo. I'll see how things is, and if all be right and smooth, I'll shout out to you." With these words, he flung the stilts into the orchard, laid hold of the rope, and dexterously scaled the fence. Marsh and I waited the issue of this bold undertaking with many painful apprehensions ; for we expected, every moment, to hear the snapping of a trap, or the firing of a gun. Though the hedge was too bushy to

be seen through, we could distinctly hear every step he made; and we gazed at each other with as much discomposure, as we may suppose two criminals at the bar, who are in dread of hearing sentence of death passed upon them, to do. Ned trembled; I sweat; and what was still more strange, we durst not, for our lives, open our lips, to communicate to each other the various fears with which we were tormented. Our daring companion, however, at last, made our minds easy, by crying out, as he advanced towards the place where we stood,—“Come over—come over!—you may venture, my lads! D’ye hear me? The board is a liar! There’s neither man-trap nor mouse-trap here.” Ned and I now had a terrible scuffle which must go over first; but he was beforehand with me, having got fast hold of the rope; so I was obliged to let him take the lead.

Having thus conquered the most difficult obstacle to the accomplishment of our

purpose, we began to make preparations for the attack. The first object we fixed our eyes on was a beautiful plum-tree, the fruit of which hung in such luscious clusters, that we were determined to lay destructive hands upon it. I was to climb it, as being the most nimble of the three; Ned to stand under, to catch the spoil in a small sack which he had brought with him for that purpose; and Tom to keep guard: all which we proceeded to do, with the utmost regularity, caution, and dispatch. When I had knocked off six quarts, or thereabout, of these *striking beauties*, I came down, according to orders, and quickly mounted a large spreading apple-tree: but scarce had I begun to strip it of its honours, when Tom came running towards us; and with a countenance full of disorder, told us we were discovered; for that he had seen a lad coming hastily towards the place with a thick club in his hand. Ned, who was a most scandalous coward at bottom, did not wait to be convinced, but threw down

the bag of fruit, and took to his heels. Notwithstanding the hedge was to all appearance impervious, he forced his way through; and Prow, who did not like to run the risk of a drubbing, made after him, pell-mell; leaving me astride one of the highest boughs in the tree. This, as the reader may suppose, was a station which did not at all suit with my inclination; I therefore did my best to quit it; but, alas! my fears would not allow me. I had not the power to move: My legs felt as heavy as if a leaden weight had been tied to each of them; and my heart beat against my sides with inconceivable violence. By this time the enemy was come up. He assailed my ears with a terrible discharge of coarse and barbarous English. "Come down, thief!" cried he; "or I'll knock thee off thy perch, as sure as thee'st born, that I wal!" These words reached me effectually; for I dropped out of the tree like a dead bird, and pitched upon my head. Had not my fall been broken by the branches of an adjacent

tree, I know not what would have been the consequence: Indeed, as it was, I was very much stunned, and lay, for some moments, in a very sorry condition. As soon as I had got upon my feet, I felt a great *penchant* for running away; but the lad, guessing my thoughts, collared me; and flourishing his club over my head, cried out—"Stop, stop, master son of a whore! thee sha'nt ga off so neither! If thee stirs a stride, I'll brain thee." I begged, prayed, and entreated he would let me go; telling him, in the most persuasive manner in my power, that I would never come near the place again: but begging, praying, and entreating did me no kind of service. He returned for answer, that he would let me go, I might rest assured, but that I must box with him first. Although I was a tolerable pugilist, and not afraid to challenge out any boy of my own age, I did not at all relish the idea of coming to blows with this gentleman; for he was taller than me by half a head, and was so uncommonly broad-

set, that I knew very well, if I engaged, I should be worsted. I told him, by way of excuse, if he would defer the encounter till the following day, I would give him the meeting at any hour, and in whatever place he would name. But he was too deep to be put off in that way. He answered, that I might take my choice whether I would fight him, or have my nose rubbed in a heap of cow-dung, swearing he'd be d—n'd if I should not do one of the two. This was a hard alternative. Bruising with such a sturdy lad, in my present condition, was what I would gladly have avoided; and smelling at such an abominable nosegay, my olfactory nerve absolutely declared against. What was to be done? There was no retreating. I was pressed for a reply. At length, after a little deliberation, I said, if he would shew me fair play, I would give him battle; to which he readily agreed; and, to do him justice, staid till I was ready for him, and suffered me to assault him first. He contented himself

for some time, in warding off my blows ; but lending him one at last, which he did not look for, he waxed hot, and reimbursed me with double interest. I received two such uncivil knocks upon my temples, that my head went quite dizzy ; and I staggered about the place like a man that is overcharged with liquor. But that did not last long. Inflamed with resentment, I flew upon him like a lion, and compelled him to give ground. And such was my desperateness, that I quickly exhausted the whole of my strength. All that he could do whilst my fury continued, was to defend himself ; which he did with extraordinary firmness, bravery, and coolness, and then became the assailant again. He now fully saw I was a person not to be played with. He did not distribute his blows so partially as he had before done ; but set upon me with a violence not to be withstood. I fell back apace. 'Tis true I made some resistance ; but that was too feeble to check his rage. As I retreated, I frequently cried out " I yield, I yield ! "

But he turned a deaf ear to that, and to the no small disfigurement of my face, kept labouring away.

The battle, however, was soon put an end to. One rude stroke upon my breast, brought me to the ground. I fell with my head against the trunk of a tree ; which did more for my antagonist, than all the hard blows he had before been at the trouble of giving me. The whole place, methought, went round like the fly of a jack ; the blood that flowed from my mouth and nostrils, appeared the colour of saffron-water : my temples beat high : I attempted to speak, but could not : in short, I neither knew where I was, nor what I did, till, being seized with a violent sickness, I vomited. The discharge was pretty copious ; so that I was sensibly revived ; and in a few minutes, made shift to get upon my legs. I fully expected that I should be knocked down again ; so, as my reader must needs think, I looked about me not over bravely. But

how great was my amazement when I saw I was alone! My champion was off. I suppose he fancied he had done my business for me; and not being willing to have my death laid at his door, had judged it expedient to decamp.

Though I was extremely heart-sick after my work, I did not stand making complaints to myself, but made the best of my way to the hedge, and pushed through it, without receiving much incivility or harsh usage from the prickles. I had not walked far, before I descried my run-away companions, sat waiting for me upon a little bank at some distance. Base and cowardly as they had acted, in leaving me to bear the brunt, I must confess the sight of them gave me, as it were, fresh life. I put the best leg foremost, and considering the bruised state of my carcass, soon reached them. I never in all my life saw two persons look, at one and the same time, so wild and stupid as they did. Their eyes and mouths were open to

the utmost width ; and after they had silently surveyed me from top to toe for several minutes, they shook their heads very sorrowfully at one another, and fell a crying. I should, without doubt, have accompanied them, had not the strange appearance of Ned engaged my notice. His situation was truly ridiculous ; indeed, I could almost have found in my heart, bad as I was, to have laughed at him. For, in his hurry to get out of the orchard, he had lost a shoe and a stocking, and had torn off one of the legs of his trowsers. He had three long scars upon his forehead, another upon his chin, and an abominable dirty face ; both cheeks being glazed with the slime from his nose. Tom, for his part, had left his hat behind him ; but had received no personal injury ; he only regretted the loss of the fruit. It was very well for me that I found them, or I firmly believe I should not have got home that day ; for, after I had washed myself in a brook that ran by the bottom of the bank, my joints became so sore and

stiff, that I could not point a foot, except with the greatest pain. They carried me home, by turns upon their backs; but being afraid to go into the house, lest my nurse should take them to task, they set me down by the door, and left me.

As luck would have it, Mrs. Racy, in a little time, observed me through the window, and brought me in. "In the name of God, child!" cried she, turning pale; "where hast thou been, and what is the matter with thee?" To save my comrades from blame, I artfully answered, that I had fallen from a high gate, in attempting to walk over it. If she had had a grain of suspicion in her temper, she would have seen at once, that this was a most scandalous falsehood; for the bruises I had in different parts of my face, an enlarged nose and mouth, and a couple of black eyes, but too clearly manifested what I had been doing. However, she did not in the least question my story, but wept over my misfortune with motherly tenderness.

Before I had been seated a quarter of an hour, an old maiden lady, an acquaintance of Mrs. Racy's, came a gossiping, as was her daily custom. After having learnt my mishap, and sufficiently rubbed me down with the oil of pity, she began, in her usual way, to tell the news of the day; that is, what was stirring in and about the village. "Lard bless us!" says she, charging her nostrils with a hearty pinch of genuine Scotch; "there is nothing but wickedness going forward now-a-days. This vile and sinful earth harbours nothing but rogues and knaves! Every hour, yea, every minute brings unto us fresh instances of ungodliness, and crimes of the blackest die. Have you heard, neighbour Racy, that honest farmer Sheafby has had a good cart-rope and three rakes, the property of his father-in-law, stolen out of his barn to-day?" My foster-dam answered her in the negative. "Not!" cried she; "I am astonished at that! Why, all the village is in an uproar. The poor man is almost gone beside himself about it. He sus-

pected those two villainous rascalions, I mean that tall slovenly lad, and the publican's son, and went to both their homes, but neither of them was to be found; however, he has just now caught them as they were passing by his house, and forced them to go in with him; but how it will turn out, I can't pretend to say. I suppose they have been committing some depredation or other; for the big lad's face, as I am told, is very much disfigured with scratches, and his trowsers are hanging in shreds."

While she was thus speaking, my nurse looked exceedingly grave at me, and sighed repeatedly. The old beldam, turning sharply round to me, prayed me to tell her, with a meaning fleer, what was my opinion of the business? My confusion was too great to be concealed; I had nothing to say for myself. The fear of being caught in a lie, harassed me more than the fear of punishment. I was going to confess the truth, and im-

plore pardon ; but a loud bounce at the door prevented me. Before my nurse had time to answer it, who should bolt in but the injured farmer himself, with my two unlucky friends in his custody, followed by almost half the village. I was totally confounded. Poor Ned was the very picture of horror ; but Tom, who had a much bolder heart, and consequently a better assurance, looked as if he did not care a straw about the matter. Sheafby, being an extremely hot-headed man, broke forth into the most outrageous exclamations concerning the robbery ; and after a preface that would have wearied the patience of Job, addressed himself to my nurse, as near as I can recollect, in the following terms. “ Lookee, mistress ! I dont knaw what you may think, but I thinks, and ivery honust purson will think the same, that a mortul man should only be cheated and stared in the face, as I have been, when he is lousy enough to live on the fat of the land, without putting his hell-fired bones down to some

'dustrious trade ; but I works hard for my daily bread, and for that rasont wont be humbugged. The devil a bit do I covet any man's goods ; and no man shall covet mine if I can help it, much möre lay foul fingers on 'em. If I knaw'd for sartain, lookee, who it was that had done this here job, by G—, they should pay devilish dear for their peeping : but I'll smoke the rascats before I have done, smite my toes if I don't !" " For heaven's sake, good man," cried Mrs. Racy ; " endeavour to speak without swearing." " Swearing !" echoed he, in a boisterous tone ; " it would make a parson swear, d—n my blood, if it wouldn't ! You may wink at it as you please, but I'll be shot, if I put up with such infernalt doings. I knaw what's what, lookee, as well as here and there one ; and won't be composed upon. Nobody can make me believe that black's the white of my eye ; or that my breeches are made of buck-skin," Well, and what have I to do with your loss ?" cried Mrs. Racy, rather displeased at his impudent

method of speaking ; " I do not thank you for making my house into a bear-garden. I should be glad to know your business." " That I will tell you in the twentieth part of a second ;" cried he, " Pray, good master sly-boots, (coming up to me) didn't you help these two ragamuffins, in stealing my rope and rakes ? Come, come, you had better own to't at once : for I shall be sure to find it out ; and as soon as I do, I'll drive ivery devil of you to n—n, head over heels !" " What is the reason," cried Mrs. Racy, hastily ; " what is the reason that you accuse him ?" " Because," answered he, " I have been tould by a sartain purson, who knaws black from white, right from wrong, and the moon from green cheese, as well as any chap in the parish, that he seed these two devilkins, and somebody like your son, or what you please to call 'un, going through his fields with something like the things that is missing ; and so that's all about it." Mrs. Racy, being somewhat staggered with this, was beginning to

question me, but Ned, fearing perhaps that I should make an open confession of all, interrupted her, by saying, that *he* had no hand in the business. "Hold you your jaw, you snotty long-shanked black-guard!" cried the enraged Sheafby, pulling him by the ears; and desired Mrs. Racy to proceed. "Come, Godfrey," said she, very mildly; "speak for yourself, my love!" I did so; and made good a trite observation, that a person who tells one bold lie, will advance a thousand more, if necessary, to back it with. When I had said as much as I *could* say in my own vindication, she put the same words to Marsh; who stammered out a bungling defence, but, nevertheless, made his own case as clear as noon-day. It now came to Tom's turn to speak. He, with his wonted effrontery, good lad! swore that Sheafby's intelligencer was an arrant liar, and deserved his ears cropping.

Here the affair ended. The farmer, seeing he could do no good, set his pri-

soners at liberty, and departed in peace. The inquisitive throng followed ; and the house was again quiet. "Lack-a-day, lack-a-day !" cried the old woman, rising from her chair, and looking me full in the face : "What a world, what a world, what a world ! The Lord deliver us, the Lord deliver us ! Nothing but sin, nothing but sin ! Oh, Master Godfrey, Master Godfrey !" Having uttered this, she shook her head at Mrs. Racy ; and venting a sigh that had more spleen and ill-humour, than woefulness in it, hobbled out of the house.

What with shame and fatigue, I was quite overcome ; so that my good matron found it necessary to convey me to bed ; where I was laid up, with aching bones, and a tortured conscience, for the space of four days.

CHAP. VI.

Containing several smart and unheard-of vagaries, which are treated of in a very correct and masterly style.

DURING the time of my illness, Mrs. Racy nursed me with so much tenderness and humanity, and was so assiduous to please me, that I could not be happy in my mind, until I had disclosed the secrets concerning farmer Sheafby, the robbery of the orchard, and the battle with the cow-boy.

But as I spoke rather too affectionately of my two reckless companions, and did every thing in my power to exculpate them, she took up the matter very warmly. "I am sorry," said she, with a solemn look; "I am sorry to hear my Godfrey speak in such high terms of those who lead him into every kind of wicked-

ness. I thought my boy had too noble a spirit, and too good an understanding, to take delight in injuring the poor people. What pleasure can he find in the company of two silly boys, who, instead of being a comfort to their parents, are for ever causing them trouble? He surely does not know what kind of characters they bear, else he would blush to be seen with them. They are hated by the whole country; and if my Godfrey does not immediately drop their acquaintance, he will be hated too. They will not only teach him all manner of mischief, but also to swear and tell lies; which are by far the worst thing he can do. I am certain he will not like to be pointed at, and called wheresoever he goes, an artful young rogue; besides, his mammy will be called a very naughty woman for not whipping him. And what will the gentleman in the large wig say? Why, he will say, that he is a very wicked boy, and that he will have nothing to do with him. His mammy will be forced to turn her back

upon him too: then, what will become of him? Where will he find food to eat? He will neither have a rag to cover his poor little limbs with, nor a bed to sleep in, and he must go through frost and snow without either shoes or stockings. Nobody will give him a farthing; and he will, at last, be starved to death. Now, if he would be a good boy, and mind what his mammy said to him, God would love him, the neighbours would love him, and every body would love him; and he would be as happy as a little prince." This well-timed admonition worked upon me forcibly: I was so much ashamed of myself, that I turned away my face, and had no power to reply.

In about a week from the day on which I took my bed, I was as hearty and sprightly as I had ever been in my life; but had not the least inclination either to go out, or to see my frontless acquaintances: indeed, they scarce ever entered my head: I was quite another person;

that is to say, I looked back upon my past follies with more disgust than pleasure ; and the whole of my thoughts were directed towards that felicity, which Mrs. Racy had often told me was the sure reward of good conduct. As I happened one morning, whilst we were at breakfast together, to speak of Marsh and Prow in a very slighty manner, she took it for a good sign of my reform, and asked me if I did not repent making companions of them ? “ So much so, mammy,” answered I, very soberly, “ that I will follow your advice in every thing, and never go near them again, indeed, I wont.” She greatly approved what I said, thinking it came sincerely from my heart, and endeavoured to heighten my indignation of them, by painting them in very black colours, and telling me, that no good would come to them.

Hardly had an hour slid away after this, when, casting my eyes towards the window, I caught two merry-looking faces

very impudently staring into the house, and was not long in discovering them to be the property of the very gentlemen whose company I had, in such good earnest, promised to break off from. They made signs for me to come out. I tried to look sour at them, but could not for the life of me. The morning being fine and frosty, they seemed to look so keen and fresh, that I would have given the world to have recalled what I had recently declared. To say the truth, I felt that I was fond of them, in spite of what I had just said to the contrary. Duty pulled hard on one side, and friendship on the other; but, I must own, my heart took part with the latter. Mrs. Racy was then up stairs: what hindered me from going to speak with them? They beckoned me again: I could resist the temptation no longer; the shackles of duty broke in twain; so I seized my hat, and sallied out to them in a trice. They were so rejoiced to see me, that I thought they would have pulled me piece-meal.

Having congratulated me on my recovery, they told me, as a piece of news, that they had constructed a curious paper-kite, with which, as soon as it was dark, they were going to have some sport, and asked me, if I would have a share in it. Before I assented, I desired to know why they had fixed upon night for the flying of it. "O, there's the fun of the thing!" cried Tom, giggling. "But come along with us, and we'll shew it to you." Without asking any more questions, though I was as wise as ever, I followed them into a ruinous pig-sty, which, it appeared, had been their workshop. The kite, as near as I can remember, stood about a yard and a quarter high, and, what was very extraordinary, had three tails, at the ends of which were three large scooped turnips, each containing a small piece of candle, fastened in, mechanically enough, with wire. It required very little consideration to find out the drift of their contrivance: I easily saw it was to excite alarm in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Racy's good advice,

I must acknowledge, was very soon forgotten. Their ingeniousness, together with the novelty of the whim, pleased me so much, that I agreed to join them, and the hour of eight, and the church-yard, being appointed for the time and place of meeting, we separated; for Prow, who certainly had the cunning of his *Tartarean* majesty, said it would not do for us to be seen together.

In my way home, I happened to see an old sow, stretched at full length upon the ground, and giving suck to a numerous tribe of little ones. As I was not in one of the most staid humours, I stopped short, and must needs be meddling with her. Observing an old tin-kettle lying upon the ground, I picked it up without delay, and tied it forthwith to the old lady's tail, and afterwards made her a present of a smart kick athwart her buttock, for which she vented a grunt of disapprobation, and got up. No sooner did she feel the weight that hung at her tail, than

she began to blow her deep-bass pipes, and after tumbling about in the dirt, and making a thousand droll attempts to extricate herself, ran sharply towards the church. The little ones, having no inclination to be left behind, struck up a sonorous concert, and moved after their mother with amazing celerity. The kettle beat against the pavement merrily, and the dissonant music of the afflicted grunTERS became so loud and shrill, that the people came running to their doors helter-skelter, to see what was the matter. Some, on beholding the situation of the frightened sow, laughed as if they had had an intention to split their sides. Others of a more sober stamp, endeavoured to stop her; but they might have saved themselves the trouble, for such was her speed, that she slipped through their fingers like a new-caught eel; and making directly into the church-yard, knocked the poor sexton headlong into a grave; ran over two youngsters who were busily engaged in a game at marbles;

cracked both the shins of the parish-clerk with the kettle ; and, lastly, sprang into the belfry, where she was luckily seized by some of the people, and so prevented from doing any further mischief.

Not thinking it wholly prudent or safe to stay any longer, I marched home with a nimble foot, and was asked by Mrs. Racy, if I knew what was the occasion of those strange noises she had heard ? I unconcernedly replied in the negative, and sat me down. As I had not been absent more than half an hour, she did not inquire either where I had been, or what I had been doing, as she was accustomed to do, but desired me to read a chapter in the Bible, which I did, though, I must own, in a very fluttered and awkward manner ; however, she seemed not to notice it, at least she said nothing, and every thing passed on quietly enough, till after dinner, when Mrs. Rattletongue, wife to the clerk, came in, and gave us the story of the pigs with exquisite elo-

quence. "My husband," said she, when she had concluded her melancholy and long-winded narrative, "swears death and judgment against certain persons! [here she cast a significant glance at me.] Indeed, it is much if he does not make examples of them all. If I must have my will, I'd bundle every soul of 'em up together, and send 'em to Nova-Scotia; a pack of idle dogs! [here she eyed me again.] Lord help us! they can come home, after they have been doing mischief, and look, forsooth, as mild and simple as a penny-worth of cream-cheese! Nothing might have happened, they appear so easy: but some folks pet some folks more than will do them good, I think." She laid such a mighty heavy stress upon the words 'some folks,' that my nurse applied them, and I believe very justly, to herself; and replied, with some heat, that she perfectly understood her insinuations, but knew how to act without the advice or instruction of any person; that her accusation against me

was ill-founded, and highly unjust; but as to the others alluded to (meaning Marsh and Prow), she would not answer for them. Then turning to me, she patted me upon the head, and said, with a smile that denoted great goodness of heart, "No, no, my love, you shall not be condemned for that which you are not guilty of. I can clear you from this. Let those who make it their business to work on mere suspicion, beware." Mrs. Rattletongue shewing evident marks of discontent in her countenance, muttered something about encouragement, and went away in a huff. And Mrs. Racy, who really believed me innocent, bade me be of good courage, vowing, that if the clerk and his talkative wife persisted in their scandalous charge, (so she called it) she would take such measures with them, as would not fail to silence them.

I should be glad to say, in this place, that I was again smitten with the rod of remorse, but, as truth will go farthest, so

I must confess, that I not only felt a secret pleasure at the thoughts of what I had done, but also silently laughed at the credulity of my unsuspecting matron, who was so exceedingly zealous in my cause, and gave those who censured my behaviour, such sharp reproofs, that the generality of the people began to suspect she winked at my follies, and therefore slackened their civilities towards her.

The time for executing the tragical business of the kite drawing near, I watched her motions as intently as a cat does those of a mouse, and was upon thorns lest I should not have an opportunity to get out. The clock at length struck eight, and my apprehensions increased proportionably with my wishes. She, however, for some purpose or other, turned her back. I seized the favourable moment, and slipped slyly through the back-door. The night was so uncommonly dark, that I had something to do to find my way to the churchyard. In truth, I could scarce see the

length of a foot before me. I did homage to the ground several times, and, as if that were not sufficient, I ran straight against an old woman, and knocked a glass-bottle out of her hand, which not being proof against stone, broke, and there instantly arose such a strong fume, that I plainly smelt I had been the means of her losing her *spirits*, and apprehending, from her grumbling, that her senses, or rather her patience, would follow, and I should be clawed for my clumsiness, I went forward, without so much as begging her pardon.

No sooner had I gained the top of the steps that led into the hallowed rendezvous, than I perceived a light just by the steeple, which I immediately approached, and discovered somebody in a corner, doing that which nature requires. Not doubting but that it was one of my fellow-conspirators, I walked confidently up to him, and cried, in a familiar manner, "Well, have you got every thing ready?"

The person, who was no other than Jeremy Pickaxe, the sexton, a lying superstitious old fellow, was so terrified at seeing my shadow on the steeple, (for near as I was to him, he had neither seen me advance, nor heard me speak) that he started hastily from his curved posture, and crying out, in a weak tremulous voice, "G— defend me! G— defend me! The Lord be merciful to me a sinner!" snatched up his lantern, and without staying to adjust the disorder of his breeches, scampered over the church-yard as if old Pluto, and all his infernal retinue, had been at his back.

I was now in the dark again; and having walked about this gloomy place for near a quarter of an hour, without my confederates making their appearance, my patience was entirely worn out, so I made up my mind to return peaceably home; but, before I had gone many steps, I perceived the glimmering of another candle, at the East-end of the church,

and heard two persons in deep converse, who, to my unspeakable joy, proved to be them.

We did not lose a moment's time, but posted with the paper-phœnomenon to a spacious meadow hard by; and having lit the three turnip-lamps, we set about the raising of it. It ascended, although the wind was rather high, so very steadily, that not one of the lights went out; and when it had got to its limited height, that is, when we had given it the whole length of the twine, we tied it to a stout stick, which we thrust firmly down in the ground, and bustled back into the church-yard.

Ned, as had been previously concerted, flew about the place like a raging bedlamite, crying out, in a most hideous manner, "The sky's on fire! the sky's on fire!" and in less than ten minutes, the major part of the inhabitants had quitted their houses, some with lights and some without, and formed a most woful assem-

bly. The air was shortly filled with the hoarse groans of men, women's shrill cries, and children's lamentable screams. All was confusion and dismay.

Hereupon, we mixed with the sorrowful crowd, and made as big a noise as the rest. The din grew louder and louder: nothing was to be heard but unintelligible orisons, and loud expressions of frantic fear. Nothing to be seen but clasped hands, distorted faces, and quaking limbs. While some very devoutly dropped upon their marrow-bones, others fell quite prostrate, and many, with tottering heads, contemplated the shining roots. Never were people so shamefully jested with; and never, I believe, were people in a more miserable consternation. But we enjoyed the sport, as we pleased to call it, and so that was enough for us.

Amid the general ejulation, I heard Mrs. Racy pathetically exhorting those that were about her, to restrain their

distress, declaring, that it was highly wicked to make such an outcry. I chanced to stand near the old sexton, who, in the height of his terror, cried, his head shaking all the while,—“Oh, my friends! it is barely ten minutes since I saw the apparition of a monstrous giant, standing with his huge back against the streple. His face, I swear unto you, was as pale as the moon on a frosty night. His head was bound with a bloody napkin: his eyes were two solid balls of fire, which he rolled about most furiously: round his middle I counted fifteen hissing snakes: and in his right hand he held an iron-truncheon. He marched up to me with terrible strides; and puffing a blue flame in my face, which, I vow to God, had like to have suffocated me, cried out—O, Jeremy, Jeremy! thou shalt, before thou canst say Jack Robinson, see this vast body of mine changed into three tiny stars! and, oh, my friends, he directly flew up into the sky.” A tremendous groan ensued. “Out upon’t, thou old

rogue!" said I to myself; "I could prove thee to be a most foul liar, if I durst." About this time, the parson and clerk came among us, clad in their holy vestments. The former had a large prayer-book in his hand, and the latter a glass-lantern, which cast such a clear and glaring light around, that every person was now perfectly discernible. Heavens! what a variety of disordered visages did I behold! A more ludicrous spectacle, I think, never struck the sight. They looked at one another, as much as to say—'The time is certainly come:' and their wailings became still more loud and grievous.

Master Jeremy was beginning to tell his horrible tale over again to the clerk, but the godly vicar, who very well knew his propensity to fibbing, stopped his mouth, and admonished him with "Peace, thou wretched babbler! Repent thy manifold sins, ere it be too late; and tell no more of thine improbable, and fabricated

stories." He then, with profound solemnity, commanded all those that were standing, to bend their stubborn knees; which was no sooner done, than he began to repeat the paternoster at a good round rate; and Amen, to do him justice, gabbled after him with equal glibness and precision. This finished, they set about saying the creed; but, before they had gone half through with it, Ned and Tom, unable to contain themselves any longer, fell into an excessive fit of laughter, which so much surprised and shocked the religious multitude, that they rose confusedly from their devotion, and with uplifted hands, called them profane heathenish wretches, and hardened brutes.

The truthful sexton stood motionless: the blacks of his eyes turned completely into his nose, and his mouth was drawn awry. The reverend minister left off praying; and in his holy wrath (for, truly, he was made of nothing but holiness), exclaimed, "Iniquitous boys! to what

lengths of impiety will your thoughtlessness and inexperience draw you? Remember, that this moment may be your last! In the twinkling of an eye, you are conveyed into the realms of peace and everlasting beatitude, or cast, with precipitation, down in the fearful gulph of eternal perdition." But this reprehension, divine as it was, produced no other effect than that of encreasing their risibility. They laughed so heartily, and with such vexatious impudence, in the pious man's face, that his anger, at last, got the better of his patience and sanctity; and approaching them with a fiery aspect, he tried what his fist, which was not one of the leanest make, would do. After he had boxed their ears, and pommelled them over the shoulders pretty handsomely, the clerk, who doubtless thought it was his place, the same as in praying, to conclude the business, seized them both by the hair, and with great—I mean—pious acrimony of speech, knocked their heads together. Tom bore all with the utmost fortitude; but

Ned, unaccustomed to such kind of discipline, and being of himself (to use a vulgar phrase) as soft as a boiled turnip, rubbed his injured pate, and began to laugh very ridiculously, on the wrong side of his mouth. Happy it was for me I kept my countenance: if I had not, I have good reason to believe, that the parson's righteous vassal, who was not over partial to me, would have shewn me no great favour. I apprehend, if I had fallen into his hands, he would have given me a few ever-to-be-remembered grasps. But I was, for a wonder, all gravity, so he could not, in justice, lay a finger on me.

Scarce had the confusion which the sudden mirth of my accomplices occasioned, subsided, when the kite broke loose, and descended with considerable velocity, making a thousand whirling motions in the air. It dropped, at last, on the contrary side of the church. The people gave a dismal shriek, and fell upon each other in heaps. As for the poor divine, he was

closely beset with women, who, in their fright, pulled so hard at him on all sides, that his surplice, which, by the bye, had done him many years' service, was entirely rent off his back. An honest farmer, near me, lost his wig, and exhibited a fine, glossy, hairless pate. The clerk let his big lantern slip out of his hand, which broke into shivers: and to add to the universal disorder, the unfortunate Jeremy was crying out 'murder!' under the insupportable pressure of five or six brawny bodies.

In this rueful, though diverting, condition was the panic-struck concourse, when a certain gentleman of the turf, and of loose manners, came riding up, on a mettlesome hunter, bawling and roaring more like a mad bull than a reasonable creature. His skin was so full of liquor, that he could scarce sit his saddle; and seeing the parson surrounded with such a number of females, I believe he got it into his head they were maltreating him; for,

setting up one of his hunting halloos, he, with a deftness peculiar to himself, immediately laid his long horse-whip about their ears; and, notwithstanding the devout gentleman enjoined him to desist, he continued to ride round them, cursing and lashing, till he had totally dispersed them. "That's the go!" cried he, cracking his leathern companion, in triumph, over the head of the astonished divine; "That's the go, my hearty! You see, my old cock, I've sent the salt bitches to find game elsewhere! Couldn't stand the cut, d—n me! Put 'em on a right scent my lad! What devilish stupid noses they must have, h—ll seize me, to take a church-polecat for one of the right sort."

This last reprobate expression threw the spiritual professor in a terrible fume; who quickly exclaimed, "Blasphemous wretch, thou art d—n'd to all eternity! Contrition of a thousand years' duration would not save thy impious soul!"

"Stop, stop!" interrupted the sober blade in buck-skins; "Not so fast, old Belzebub, d—n me! Let me ask you one apposite question, b—st me! Pray how many of your d—n'd progenitors' souls, G— d—n me, are at this moment howling for water? hey, you old badger?"

"Think not sir," cried the offended *rum*, in a less solemn key; "think not, sir, that you are unknown to me. You are a disgrace to your title and to mankind, Sir Reynold! Is it not scandalous that a man should be seen in so horrible a plight, when the world is in such imminent danger? Dismount, thou flagitious sinner, and supplicate the divine mercy!"

The profligate knight, provoked at the imperative tone in which the man of divinity spoke to him, called him an old, limping, broken-winded stag; and swore, that if it would not be labour lost, he would dust his coat for him d—n'd well. This drew a sharp and spirited reply from

the vicar ; which was as smartly returned by his irreligious adversary. They got, at last, to very high words ; but the clergyman, with all his piety, proved the better wrangler : so the libertine son of Diana, having exhausted the fund of his elegant phrases, took up the lap of his coat, and smacking his hand thrice upon a certain rotund and fleshy part, which he very drily recommended to his competitor's lips, clapped spurs to his horse, and rode away neck or nothing, making a noise with his mouth in imitation of a huntsman's horn.

The affair now drew to a conclusion. Directly after sir knight departed, a travelling tinker, singing most jovially, came trudging up, on his road to Lincoln. Seeing such a large body of people before him, and being struck with the incessant moans that issued from every quarter, he made a sudden stand ; and staring around him with stupid amazement, exclaimed, "Soul o' my body, what's up here?"

"Brother," cried the cleric, somewhat recovered of his choler; "thy journey is at an end! Throw down thy fardel! Approach, and rejoice; for, perchance, thy earthly toils and miseries are o'er."

The wayfaring kettle-mender taking him in a literal sense, came forward immediately, and wiping the sweat from his forehead, cried out "Well, well, master! since you have humanity enough to take pity on a pair of blistered feet, I wont stand upon ceredmonies, but e'en take you at your word, and thank you into the bargain. 'Tis bloody hard walking on these paved roads, let me tell you! The Lord knows, I am plaguily tired, and most confounded hungry: but that's neither here nor there; for, believe me or believe me not, just as you like about that, I have not tasted a single grain of the staff of life, as they call it, nor a drop of knock-'em-down, these seven hours. Zoons, master! I believe I could eat the devil, stewed in old lant!"

The pious ecclesiastic briefly informed him of his mistake ; and calling him a detestable glutton, commanded him to go down upon his knees. " Go to Babylon as like !" vociferated the tinker, not a little disappointed ; " Is it come to that after all ? But I'll see both you and your methodistical gang in the furdest corner of hell, before I'll drop in the dirt. Don't you think I'm one of your hollow, loose-jawed hippercrites ! No, no ; I've a sound bottom in me, as the saying is. Praying wont forward me to Lincoln ; so good night to you, master ; and God ha' mercy on your lying tongue."

He was about to make his way through the crowd, when the clerk laid officiously hold of him ; and cried " For C—st's sake, brother, kneel ! Incur not the divine wrath : kneel, kneel, I pray thee, kneel ! " No, brother," retorted the tinker, pushing him away with his hand ; " If I do I'll be d—n'd ; so keep your dirty paws to yourself. Kneel, quotha ! A

pretty tale, i'faith, that a man must wear out his breeches' knees to satisfy such lazy fellers as you! I should like to know what all this jaw-work and botheration is about, blocking up the road like a parcel of sheep!"

"Why," cried the clerk, in apparent amazement; "hast thou not seen the preternatural fire in the heavens?" "No, the devil take me if I have!" answered the tinker, looking up into the sky with open mouth, "Whereabouts is it, master?"

He was no sooner informed that it had fallen behind the church, than he broke out into a horse-laugh, and exclaimed, "Why, what a set of thicksculled blinkards you all must be, not to know the difference between a comat and a kite with three turnip-lanthorns at its tail! Where the dickoms were your eyes, and brains? Not in their proper places, I believe. If you'd had cowerage enough to've examint it, mayhap you would have

saved yourselves a deal o' sweating, and something else, belike; for by my troth, (drawing up his nose) I think some petticoats and breeches are not so clean and sweet as they ought to be!"

These words created a wonderful alteration in the countenances of the people. They flocked about him, as though they had been going to devour him; and with great eagerness of expression, desired him to explain himself. He told them, that as he was coming on the opposite side of the church, he saw three shining balls, lying upon the ground at some distance from each other; which when he had reached, he found to be only three hollowed turnips, with lights in them, and tied to the tail of a paper-kite. To corroborate this assertion he produced a small piece of candle, which he said he had taken out of one of them to save a farthing with.

It is impossible for me to describe the vexation of the people: their sad complaints were now converted into the most vehement imprecations. They swore, flatly, that if they discovered who the perpetrators of the deed were, they would not leave them with life. Ned and Tom, hearing this, stole away unperceived even by me. The parson and clerk walked off in silence, though with airs of the highest clerical consequence. The toothless sexton, fearing perhaps that he should be called to an account for having propagated the marvellous story of the giant, sneaked off with all the littleness of detected guilt; muttering through his gums, "The Lord's will be done!" The jocund tinker, after having laughed merrily at every one's expence, cursed all blind stupidity, and pursued his journey: the crowd dispersed, angry enough in all conscience: and I, with a fleetness which I commonly used on such occasions, ran home, and crept to bed.

Mr. Rattle tongue, early next morning, made it his business to stick a paper upon one of the church-doors, which stated, that two shillings and six-pence, in lawful money of Great Britain, would be given, as a reward, to any person who would discover the author or authors of the late wicked and alarming contrivance, so that he or they might be brought before the vicar, and punished according to his or their deserts.

Prow, getting a wind of this, went, the first thing he did, to the clerk, and with traitorous tongue, affirmed that Marsh and I were the real offenders: but he missed of his design; for, instead of fingering the promised muneration, he was shut up in the vestry, and was kept close prisoner there for more than five hours.

Meanwhile, the clerk contrived a snare for Ned and me, which was so artfully spread, that we both fell into it at one time. He procured two bull-dogs; brought

them into the centre of the village ; caused a quarrel betwixt them ; and then concealed himself behind a stack of hay.

The sound of their hostile barking finding its way to my ears, I was drawn to the field of battle as quickly as a piece of steel is to a loadstone ; but, sharp as I was, Ned, who loved to see a dog-fight in his heart, was there before me. I found him busily animating the combatants with “ Hie, lads ! hie ! ” and clapping their backs. I immediately joined him in this method of stimulation ; and we both did our best to keep up the engagement ; but, alas ! our sport was not of long continuance : for the crafty clerk, who had carefully watched his opportunity, bolted suddenly out of ambuscade, laid hold of us both by the arms, and slipping a halter over our heads, cried out “ Ha, ha, my jockeys ! have I caught you ? You ’ll fly kites again, will you ? O, you shall be well dressed for it, my gentlemen ! I ’ll have you roasted alive, mind if I dont ! ”

You shall be chopped into mince-meat, you rascally dogs!"

With these and the like menaces, he made an effort to drag us forward; but we kicked and flounced, pulled back, and were so very unruly, that he found it absolutely necessary to call out for assistance, which he, however, did not obtain, till we had made his shins suffer pretty sorely.

Being carried before the vicar, who sat writing in his study, we were ordered down into a dark cellar, until he should have thought on a punishment adequate to the enormity of our offence.

For the first half-hour, we bore our confinement with firmness, and the most perfect composure; but the place being most shockingly damp, we at length grew so chill, that we set our backs against the door, purposely to break it open, but it was securely made, so we failed in the

attempt. How sincerely did we now repent us of our folly ! The ideas that arose in our minds touching the loss of liberty, and the chastisement that was preparing for us, made us thoroughly dejected. I believe, if we had had the whole county of Lincoln at our disposal, we should readily have given it to have *slipped the collar*.

That Prow was our accuser we little dreamed : indeed, we had no cause to suspect his sincerity. On the reverse, we were in full expectation that he would be brought to keep us company.

The cold soon became so intolerable, that our teeth might really have vied loudness with the castanet ; our feet were quite benumbed ; and we danced about the cellar in a most bedlamite manner. Marsh, by taking too great a round, unfortunately struck against a cask of beer ; the cock of which being loose, and catching, by some means or other, in the rags

of his galligaskins, came out, and the liquor followed with torrent-like violence. Almost terrified out of all his wits at this sudden accident, he called out to me, in a doleful tone of voice, to help him to grope for the cock, which I readily did ; but before we succeeded in finding it, the cask had disgorged every drop of its contents on the floor. A most serious dialogue consequently passed between us ; and our affliction terminated in one of the finest duettos of blubbering that ever was heard.

Whilst we were in this distressful condition, the clerk unexpectedly opened the cellar-door, and looking in upon us, bade us come forth. We tacitly obeyed the summons ; and shivering with cold and fear, followed him up the cellar-steps into the room above. After he had given us a slight reprimand, and told us to be good boys for time to come, he said we might go about our business. Amazed at this unlooked-for lenity our hearts leaped for joy, and we budged, without waiting for second orders, to our particular homes.

But I had not occasion to wonder at the clemency of Mr. Rattle tongue long: for as soon as I had got into the house, I was told by the amiable Mrs. Racy, who was well nigh choked with grief, that he had come to her while I was under durance, and in the most blustering language conceivable, threatened her with a prosecution, for not keeping me in peaceable bounds: that she had sued, in the most submissive manner, for my deliverance, promising at the same time to do her utmost to reclaim me; but that all entreaties and assurances served only to augment his ire; she therefore had recourse to his majesty's picture, set in a piece of irresistible *metal*; with which having palmed him, his contracted eye-brow was instantly distended to the summit of his forehead; his domineering epithets were changed into the softest complaisance; his composition of ice was completely thawed. He swore she was the very spirit of liberality: in a word, that he was her humble servant in every thing; and declared, he would give

me my liberty with the greatest pleasure in the world.

She again read me a long lecture ; but it was, as usual, mingled with so much tenderness, mildness, and affection, that I felt but a moment's compunction ; and, instead of tiring of, I grew ten times more eager in my sportive pursuits.

With regard to Tom, as soon as it came to our ears that he was our accuser, we took much umbrage at him, and avoided his company for several days ; but the first opportunity he had of throwing himself in our way, he made so shrewd and penitential an apology, that we easily forgave his perfidy, and were very soon as good friends as ever.

The next prank we played immersed us deeper and deeper in the ill-will and discredit of the parishioners. The case was plainly this : a certain herdsman who rented a small pasturage in the neighbour-

hood, taking his cattle monthly to Lincoln-market, we made a common practice, as he was an ill-humoured churlish fellow, of plaguing him, by stopping and running his sheep.

One of these times, it was our hap to get into his claws ; when he applied, with right good-will, an oleaginous plaister of hazel to our backs ; which incited such a large degree of gratitude in us, that we were resolved to return the compliment in some shape or other. He had a favourite she ass, which, on account of her uncommon tractableness, and capability of bearing unconscionable burdens, he would not have parted with for a trifling sum. What did we do but mark this poor inoffensive beast for the object of our vengeance.

A set of workmen were, at the time, decorating the interior of the church ; and while they were one day eating their dinners in the vestry, we contrived to

steal a bucket of white paint and three brushes out, which we expeditiously carried into the field where the long-eared animal was very contentedly feasting on thistles. We had no great trouble in catching her; and having dipped our brushes in the oily composition, we fell to work in good earnest. While Marsh daubed her thickly from the point of the nose to the very tip of the tail, Prow and I were fully employed in beautifying her legs, and the rest of her body. The easy creature stood stock-still till we had completely trimmed her, and then, moving a few paces, she began to bray with all her force, as if to thank us for the great pains we had been at in changing the colour of her coat. Indeed, she became her new dress so well, that any one viewing her at a distance, would unquestionably have taken her for a statue of the whitest marble.

Before we had sufficiently admired our handiwork, we were disturbed by the

sound of several voices, and on looking behind us, saw, to our no small amazement and fear, three of the painters whom we had plundered, making hasty steps towards us. As the timid stag, roused by the murderous howling of the eager hounds, fearful, quits the thick brake, and nimbly bounds o'er hedge, gate, and brook, so flew we out of the field.

What passed between the men, when they came up to the ass, I know not ; but as soon as they got back into the village, I believe, they made a sad noise about their paint ; and likewise sent the drover word of the strange metamorphosis the hide of his beast had undergone.

No sooner had his ears swallowed the unfortunate tidings (I say unfortunate ; for he dearly loved his Polly, as he called her, and could not bear to hear that she was a *turncoat*), than he set out hastily from his habitation, although he was miserably tortured with the gripes, and came

to his pasture-land puffing and blowing like an over-ridden horse. He was possessed of a notion that the paint had poisoned his darling's blood; and dreading that she would spread corruption through his whole herd of cattle, he, though with a reluctant heart, knocked her on the head, declaring, as he struck the fatal blow, that she was, unexceptionably, the best ass in Christendom, and that he would not have sold her for the wealth of the mint. After he had shed a plentiful flood of tears over her, he went, forthwith, in quest of the vile dogs, as he styled us, accompanied by two-thirds of the village; but we, foreseeing what would happen, had wisely retreated into a thick wood, distant a good share of three miles, where we found a convenient hiding-place, in which having staid a considerable time, we ventured out, but did not deem it altogether prudent to return home, until we had made sure of the favour and protection of lady Nox.

The next morning opened with murmurs, and the most rancorous complaints. The painters growled till they were tired: the hapless drover ejaculated a thousand curses. He laid his loss so heavily to heart, that he walked about the place wringing his hands as though he had been distraught. The people pitied his case, and were ready to split with the venom of malevolence and revenge. Mrs. Racy held a long conference with the parents of my colleagues, in which she expressed a wish to make the parties injured some kind of reparation, in order to stop their mouths; but they would, by no means, accede to any measures that touched their pockets, vowing, that we might all be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for them.

In the height of this flaming disturbance, the vicar discovered the sea of ale in his cellar, and threatened eternal torments. Exasperation and disorder raged throughout the village. By dint of some contrivance, we all three got together

again ; and to be out of the noise of the clamour, took a trip into the fields, and diverted ourselves, all the day, with playing at leap-frog, hare and hounds, and divers other warm games.

In our way home at night, we were suddenly met, and assaulted by three athletic boys, one of whom I quickly knew to be the identical youth who had given me such grievous proofs of his valour and strength, in the orchard. He recollected my face almost as soon as I did his, and demanding of me, in an overbearing manner, what I wanted there ? gave me his broad fist to smell at. The other two wished to be grappling with Ned and Tom, and were, in every respect, as quarrelsome and crowing as their captain, who had, more than once, threatened to beat me black and blue. But, far from being intimidated with his bullying words, I was determined to stand my ground, and therefore, cocked my hat in his face, and gave him, as the saying is,

tit for tat. The truth is, I was in a fighting humour; and the remembrance of the hurts I had lately received at his hands, inspiring me with unusual courage, I told him, point-blank, I was not afraid of him, which declaration was instantly construed into a challenge.

Hostilities being thus renewed, our respective friends, who seemed more desirous to be the spectators of a battle, than to fight themselves, quitted each other, and came to assist us in stripping off our jackets, &c. Ned would gladly have dissuaded me from the resolution I had taken of encountering, saying, that he was confident we had much better heels than they, and might, if we chose, get away in whole skins; but Tom called him a dastardly fool, and gave me all the encouragement he could to fight. The opposite party having cried out to know if I were ready, I drew out in a moment, and met my hero, who was well prepared to receive me, with great gallantry. We

closed, as 'tis called, with equal lustiness and fury, and a terrible conflict of rib-roasting ensued. His two comrades jumped about, and took very active parts in the business, crying, with great fervor, "Now, Bob! give 'un his belly full! Knoack the pup's sides flat!" Marsh and Prow heartened me on with "Well done Godfrey! Lay on, and you'll drub him!"

Being somewhat tired with fist-labour, we fell a wrestling, and, in a little time, threw each other, with great violence, on the ground. Not a little shook by the fall, we got up, by mutual consent, and stopped a few seconds to take breath, when, after some smart quavering, we met again, with redoubled vengeance, and fought most manfully at arm's length. The contest was long and stubborn. I got a number of unfavourable thwacks both upon my face and stomach. One in particular falling a little below my right ear, sent me staggering many paces back. Had he followed up this stroke with a few

more of the same sort, I firmly believe I should have been rendered incapable of facing him again ; but the dolt, thinking perhaps, he had played the orchard-card over again, remained where he was, drawing his breath very fast, scratching his thick round head, and staring like a skewered pig. I availed myself of his embarrassment without delay ; and exerting every nerve, struck him to such good purpose, that he would joyfully have *crossed the cudgels* ; or, to speak more agreeably to the pugilistic cant, have given in. But that would not do for me. Revenge is sweet. I was resolved he should not confess me conqueror without good reason. I thought it was as well to make him an ample return as not. My resentment exceeded all manner of bounds. I knocked him about at pleasure : he retreated, and I pursued ; till, hitting him a savage blow between the eyes, he measured his length on the ground, and fell a piping most mournfully, or rather most distractedly.

Marsh and Prow, animated by my example, made a bold and vigorous brush upon the friends of my discomfited adversary, and put them, with little or no work, to the rout. They left the field in the utmost disorder, and we sent a huge shout after them ; but before many minutes had expired, we saw them returning with a numerous and hostile body of their companions, armed with stones and mop-sticks. This sight had no sooner struck our eyes, than our hearts, in the greatest palpitation and alarm, conveyed mercury to our heels, and we made off (leaving the vanquished champion groaning, and biting the ground, in a fit of the most bitter mortification), with incredible speed, and never once looked behind us, till we reached the village.

CHAP. VII.

Charged with matter which the Reader may easily digest without working physic.

THE roaring and tempestuous complaints of the parishioners, far from abating, grew, if possible, more violent. Indeed, some of the most rigorous of them went such daring lengths, that they did not scruple to declare publicly, that if we were not instantly removed, they would pull the houses that contained us about our ears. Mrs. Racy trembled for my morals: she was very much alarmed too at the repeated threats that were directly and indirectly thrown out against me, and therefore determined (not through a want of real affection for me, but to preserve her own credit, which I do assure thee, reader, did hang, owing to my wild behaviour, by a very slender thread) to get the care of me off her hands. For

this purpose, she wrote, sealed, and sent, the following letter to her good kinsman, Mr. Gilbert Prosody.

“ Esteemed Sir,

“ Your charge, little Godfrey, being now old enough to receive your superior instruction, I consider it as my duty to acquaint you thereon. It would be a great pity to neglect his education. He has a sprightly imagination, and if he be properly looked to, as I make no doubt but he will, I conceive he will make a figure in the world.” [You conceived aright, Mrs. Racy: I certainly have made a figure in the world.] “ I have taught him to read pretty correctly, and also to write a tolerable hand ; but how far I am justified in saying this, you will see when you take him to yourself. Though I am particularly wishful to see him put forward, I must confess I shall not part with him but with great concern, for, I assure you, he is a very entertaining companion : indeed, I know

“ not how I should have passed on my
“ time without him. I must entreat you
“ to have a watchful eye upon him. I
“ need not tell you that vice easily re-
“ commends itself to young minds. He
“ possesses, I trust, a good heart; and
“ will, I am persuaded, hereafter, if for-
“ tune be gracious to him, reward your
“ exemplary attention and kindness as
“ they deserve. I remain,

With affection and respect,

Your's, &c.

ANN RACY.”

In the course of two or three days, she
received this laconic answer :—

Lincoln, Dec. 2nd. 1791.

“ Dear Madam,

“ I am unboundedly indebted
“ to you for your prudent suggestion con-
“ cerning the child's learning. Multipli-
“ city of business, not neglect, prevented
“ me from giving the matter that conside-

“ration which it demanded. However,
“you may depend upon my coming over
“for him to-morrow afternoon; so you
“will be kind enough to prepare him.
“In haste.

GILBERT PROSODY.”

Mrs. Racy’s time was now wholly taken up in counsellings me to forsake my untoward courses; to pursue, invariably, the sober dictates of honesty; and to do every thing in my power to merit the unparalleled goodness of my generous and open-hearted guardian.

It was at this time she told me who and what I was; the distant residence of my parents; the froward cruelty of my grand-father Ranger; and, in short, most of those interesting occurrences which I have related in the second and third chapters of this volume.

What could be her motive for keeping me in the dark so long, in this particular,

I cannot conceive, unless it was, that she was afraid I should not be so patient of controul, if I knew the rights of my birth. Be that as it may, I was deeply touched with her narrative, regarding my parents' misfortunes and troubles, and was incensed to such a high degree at the foolish barbarity of my grand-father, that I declared, with unfeigned indignation, when I came to be a man, I would beat him.

As soon as I knew that I must absolutely quit my invaluable nurse, and the place wherein I had passed the happy days of my infancy, I was quite overcome with sorrow. I begged of her to let me continue with her another year, protesting, that I would, in future, be one of the best of boys: but it was now too late. In the midst of my grief and entreaties, Mr. Prosody arrived.

After some formal compliments had passed between him and Mrs. Racy, he came up to me, and asking me how I far.

ed, gave me a cordial kiss, which, by the bye, was tainted with the effluvia of tobacco and stale beer. I must own, I did not much like the look of his white wig, which was most extravagantly large; nor was his carbunckled nose a more pleasing object: but the affable and mild manner in which he spoke, and the tender looks which he frequently gave me, quickly scattered those little blind and childish prejudices which I had previously formed against him, and served to convince me of the perfect worthiness of his heart.

After he had discoursed with Mrs. Racy on various matters for the better half of the afternoon, he went out to look about him a little; a little I may well call it; for scarcely were five minutes spun out, before he returned. "Come, child!" cried he, putting on his top-coat in a great hurry, "we must make the best of our way to town, for, if I am not mistaken, we shall have a very heavy storm by and by." This summons, though it was delivered with great

mildness, shot like lightning to my heart. My eyes, which were suddenly filled with tears, I cast intently on Mrs. Racy, and sobbed so bitterly, that the amiable school-master appeared deeply concerned for me; and taking me by the hand, he cried, "Do not fret, my little fellow! You will see your nurse again in a very short time. Wipe your eyes, my love! and come along with your old god-father." "Yes, yes, my dear!" said Mrs. Racy, with a choked utterance, "I shall see you very often; indeed, I shall!" and then, taking me round the neck, stopped my lamentation with an eager parting kiss.

Mr. Prosody now bestrode his old dapple mare, and having taken me up before him, shook his relation by the hand, wished her much health and happiness, and set off at a slow heavy trot; which, before we had gone half a mile, caused a terrible sharp pain to come in my left side, called, by the vulgar, a stitch. I wished myself on foot a thousand times;

and seeing a little beggar-boy, who happened to pass by us, with great cheerfulness in his face, I said to myself (and not without reason, for the breath was almost shook out of my body), " Ah, little boy! you do well to look so merry; but if you were in my place, you would break your poor heart."

The horse continued to go at this punishing pace for a good hour, when, happy for my ease, the rain fell. I say, happy, because old Dido (for that was the mare's name), though she was stanch proof against the spur and whip, had an utter aversion to wet; and it now came down with such dashing violence, that she tossed about her head as if she wished to free herself from the restraint of the bridle; snorted twenty dislikes; and sent out from a certain part, which shall be nameless, loud and strong-scented gusts of wind: her hard jogging trot was turned into a pleasant hand-gallop, which she kept the remainder of the way; the pain

by degrees left me ; and we reached the city just upon the edge of dark, with scarce a dry thread about us. However, by good luck, there was a roasting fire ready for us to go to ; and we had no sooner shifted our wet clothes, than we were solaced with a good cup of hot tea. After which, Mr. Prosody put a volume of Goldsmith's History of England into my hand, and requested me to give him a specimen of my reading. This, after some sheepish hesitation, during which the worthy man often told me not to be afraid, I complied with ; and ran through two reigns, namely, Richard the Third's, and his successor's, as fluently as could be expected. " Adso, Master Godfrey !" cried he, stopping me, or probably I should have read myself breathless, " I find you have not mispent your time. I give your good nurse credit : on my word, she hath taken a vast of pains with you : I hardly know how we shall be able to recompence her. You shall begin, child, with the Latin Grammar : it is a very easy

book, and, if you be diligent, you will presently get to understand it." Here he rung the bell, and directly after a maid-servant entered the room. "Girl," said he, "send one of the boys in to me!" She dropped her curtsy, and went out. In a little time, a lad about my own size came in. "John," said Mr. Prosody to him, "go and fetch me Lilly's Grammar!" "Yes, sir," cried the boy, with a knowing grin at me, and withdrew. "Now, child," said he, "I will shew you what you have to do, and how you are to go on. It is my wish that you become a scholar. Learning, child, though you are deserted by friends and fortune, will always stay with you. It will give you a proper and becoming confidence, lead you from the wicked snares of black designing men, and cause you to be respected wherever you go. Your poor father is a scholar." Here he fetched a deep sigh, and a friendly tear stole down his cheek. He was going to proceed, but a sudden noise in the lobby stopped him. He im-

mediately opened the room-door, and, lo! Master John, and another boy, were scuffling very stoutly which should be the carrier of the grammar. "Adse!" cried he rather angrily, "what are the block-heads about? I'll be with you in a moment, young men." They no sooner heard their master's voice, than they left off; and John, coming up to him with the book, which they had, betwixt them, managed to rent very ill, and looking as if he did not exactly know whether to laugh or cry, whined out, "If you please, sir, Richard has fisted me on the eye!" "How came he to do that?" asked Mr. Prosody. "Why, sir," answered the lad, pouting, "because I would not let him bring the book into the parlour." "Very well;" cried my guardian; "but which of you, pray, hath damaged it in this manner?" "O, sir," replied the boy, "that was Richard too! He offered to snatch it out of my hand, and so tore it, sir." "You are two idle blockheads!" said Mr. Prosody; "and if I catch you at this silly

game again, I'll make a third man amongst you. Go, sir, and let me hear no more of these squabbles." The boy made an awkward bow, and retired. Mr. Prosody put the door to, retook his seat, opened the grammar, and marked out, with a pencil, twelve lines in the Introduction to the eight parts of speech, which he said I must con for my morning's lesson.

This done, he ordered in a jug of ale, and a pipe; and while he was comforting himself, with smoking and drinking, I was puzzling my brains with the task he had set me.

The clock, which stood in one of the corners of the room, giving warning for eight, he asked me, if I were ready to go to bed? observing, that nothing could be a greater hinderance to growth, or muddle the understanding more, than keeping late hours. I answered, that by his leave I would stay up a little longer. But, as

he was rather dull of hearing, he took me different; so I was given up to the servant girl, who conducted me immediately to my chamber; which was about two yards in length, and one and a half in breadth: The bed was proportionably small, but was very snug and neat. Indeed, the whole house was the picture of cleanliness and order.

The crowd of reflections that rushed upon my mind, kept me awake till the watchman had bawled twelve. One moment, Mrs. Racy was uppermost in my thoughts; another, Ned and Tom; and another, my parents; and so on in rotation. At length, the friendly god came to my assistance, sent the restless gang about their business, and put me into a state in which I knew no sorrow.

It was near half past seven before I awoke, and hearing the family stir below, I got up, dressed, and washed myself, combed out my hair, and left my cham-

ber. About the mid-way of the stairs, I met a tall slender young gentleman, clothed in a rich suit of blue, with a fine ruffled shirt, and white silk stockings. He accosted me, with "Dem'me, sir! are you the new scholar? 'Pon honour, demn'd clever creature!" and putting his leg before me, threw me headlong down. I luckily fell upon my hands, and so saved my pate, which would, in all likelihood, have done an irreparable injury to the flag at the bottom of the stairs. I did not, however, escape entirely without hurt. One of my arms was very ill sprained, and I bruised both of my knees against the baluster; but not being disposed to quarrel, I took no notice of the unmannered coxcomb, but limped very peaceably into the same room I had sat in the night before, and finding the grammar where I had left it, I amused myself with labouring my lesson, until Mr. Prossody made his appearance.

Breakfast was no sooner over, than he

took me by the hand into the school, which lay in a spacious yard, about a stones-throw from the house. It had formerly been a methodist-chapel, but being deserted by those *fanatic manglers* of religion, Mr. Prosody struck a bargain with the proprietors of it, and, with a trifling expense, made it suitable to his purpose.

On our entering the room, there was a deal of whispering, fleering, and comical looks among the boys. Indeed, they stared so hard at me, and tipped one another such shrewd winks, that I did not feel at all like myself. My face burnt terribly, and every nerve was in a violent flutter. In one word, I dare say I never looked more bleat and foolish in my life. Their grinning and prating, however, soon attracted the notice of Mr. Gilbert, who, knitting his brow, struck his cane forcibly against the table at which he sat, and, with a loud voice, demanded silence. They durst not, for their souls, disobey ;

and all being still and quiet, he bade me repeat my task. This added fuel to the fire. Every eye was now fixed upon me with galling steadfastness, and the most curious attention. My guardian perceived, in an instant, the cause of the great perplexity with which I was fighting ; and after telling the boys to mind their own business, he cried, " Take courage, child ! A faint heart, you know the proverb says, never won a fair lady. Come, my good little fellow, unbridle your tongue, and let me hear you begin." Somewhat inspirited with these words, which were uttered in a kind feeling manner, I, with much stammering, and shaking of the head, began, and was lucky enough to clear my brains of the whole twelve lines, without missing a single word.

Mr. Prosody was so well pleased with me, that he spoke many obliging things aloud (which, by the bye, made the eyes of some of his old favourites, throw out a few sparks of jealousy) ; and after he

had set me another task, he proceeded on his usual methodical course of teaching.

The number of scholars, who were regularly ranged, in classes, round the room, was ninety two; eighty-seven of which, being inhabitants of the city, were what are commonly called day-scholars, and the remaining five were boarders. Of the latter of these I shall offer my reader some account, and give him an insight into their characters and manners. I shall begin with the mightiest, and end with the meanest, that is, the highest and lowest in family and condition.

The *first* on the list must be the spruce buck who tripped up my heels on the stairs. He was no less than a lord: his name was George Oswald Bubble; and he was the son of a reduced earl, who had long since quitted court, and now led a harmless life at his seat, which lay a few miles from Lincoln; having, from a man of shining parts, sunk, like the great Dean Swift,

into a state only one remove from that of perfect ideotism. If vain-glory, insensibility, and impudence, be the properties of nobility, lord George had them in the highest perfection. His heart, which contained a chaos of poultry ambition, cowardice, and deceit, emitted not the smallest spark of goodness or liberality, was never touched by the soft hand of pity or compassion, utterly incapable of cherishing friendship, and never, I believe, prompted him to do a good or generous action in the whole course of his life. His head was well crammed with mean despicable notions, the vapours of his poor worthless heart, so that there was no room for brains, or any thing like them. His deportment was full of frivolity, instability, folly, and the grossest of levity. His person was meagre, unpleasing, and ill-proportioned, and had it not been for the aid of dress, most pitiful. He walked as stiff and stately as the great Mogul; and sat in his chair as indolently as a pig lies with her paunch in filth and mud.

He would rather have told a string of pompous fibs, than applied himself to his books: and he spoke to his master, the excellent Mr. Prosody, with a presumption and insolence that few would have borne. If he passed an ill-clad man in the street, he would turn up his nose, as if the poor fellow stunk under it: and if a beggar asked alms of him, he would spurn him from him with his foot, crying, "Off, off, stinking pauper!" He was not only destitute of fellow-feeling, but also of every virtue that warms and ennobles the human heart. Such was the character of this *illustrious* lord.

The *next* in point of *dignity*, was Andrew Pursely, the son of a gentleman of large estate in Nottinghamshire. He was one of those kind of beings who would rather receive a favour, than bestow one; and was as arrant a tell-tale as ever walked on two legs. His mind was selfish, subtle, changeable, and weak; and although his father allowed him plenty of

pocket-money, and sent him innumerable good things, he was such a sordid knave, that he frequently broke open the boxes of his fellow-boarders; and took out whatever he laid his fingers on; nay, there was scarce a boy in school that had not suffered, more or less, by his roguery. His larcenies often reached the ears of Mr. Prosody, who, several times, tried the power of flagellation upon his *podex*, and confined him, for hours together, in a cold empty garret; but all was of no avail. He was only good while the marks of the stripes staid with him; but when they had left him, he returned to his light-fingered habits as brisk as ever. He had a tolerable good stock of quaint comical sayings, some of which he always cast out, when the boys had occasion to inveigh against his dishonesty, and, by that means, commonly turned the edge of their anger. He was wont to pay a daily visit to the pantry, and make free with the titbits. But the servant-girl, who was notably cunning in her way, caught him

one time laying close siege to an apple-pye. She directly made a noise without, which the crafty thief hearing, drew off. The girl knew very well he would come back when the coast was clear ; she therefore got some garlic and aloes, which she pounded very small, mixed up together, and put, with all possible dispatch, into the pye. Master Andrew, in less than ten minutes, came slyly upon his toes, licking his lips at every stride, and eagerly renewed the attack. But no sooner had he swallowed the first mouthful, than his stomach turned : he began to throw up with great violence, pulled terrible bitter faces, and skulked away, if I may be allowed the expression, like a dog with his tail betwixt his legs. He was never seen, after this, to go near the pantry, for the wench told every one she came near, how she had served him, and he was, for a number of days, the sport and laughing-stock of the whole school.

Nathaniel Drowsy, whose father was a

respectable oil-merchant of Okeham, in Rutlandshire, was remarkable for his sluggishness and stupidity. He was always half asleep; and his bed pulled so hard in a morning, that 'twas two bodies work to drag him out by the feet. He never spoke more than half a dozen words at a time, and those with such a long hum-drum whine, that one would have thought he had been afraid of their hurting his throat. His memory was every way suitable to his laziness, for if he said a thing one moment, he forgot it the next; and I am induced to think, that Mr. Prosody had more trouble in instructing him, than all his disciples put together. He was, moreover, most shocking slovenly in his dress; and had not decency compelled him to it, he would, with his own good will, have gone from Monday morning till Saturday night, without either touching soap and water, or changing his linen. Yet, with all his failings, he was very inoffensive, and had not, I am fully certain, the least grain of art in his composition.

John Meanwell, the boy who brought the grammar into the parlour, was the truly-begotten child of Anthony Meanwell, haberdasher and hosier, in a small town, not a great way from Lincoln. Though his mental capacity was limited, he was very desirous to get forward, for which reason, he did not neglect his studies, but stuck to them with close attention, and unwearied perseverance. His diligence was observed, admired, and encouraged, by his master, with whom he was in high favour. And so great was his love of learning, that he could not even rest in bed, for he would, many a time and oft, get up in the middle of the night, when almost all in the house were snoring, creep slowly down stairs, light a candle, and translate two or three pages of Latin or Greek. He had some marks of morosity in his countenance, but those were more owing to his bookish disposition, than a natural crabbedness. Indeed, to give him his due, he had a frank open temper, and was ever ready to serve his schoolmates.

Richard Lash, the boy who fought with the last named gentleman about the bearing of the grammar, was the dearly beloved son of Peter Lash, sadler and cook-shop-keeper, in Wainfleet. For pleasantry, sagaciousness, and activity, he stood without an equal, and he was exceedingly ready at the inventing of games; nor could many vie with him in quickness of repartee. He was generally allowed to be the best wrestler and ball-player in school; and in cudgelling he would yield to none. He was very fond of his book, but still fonder of play, for during the stated hours of relaxation, he was seldom out of motion; nay, he almost, as the phrase is, ran the flesh off his bones. Though the circumstances of his friends would not permit him to dress in the finest of clothes, he was always clean and neat, and it was impossible to see a dirty spot upon him. But to say only, that he was sprightly, agile, and cleanly, would not be giving him his right, for, I really think, he was, without exception, the

best-natured soul I ever knew. He would suffer the most vexatious insult, even when he had it in his power to retort, with amazing coolness and moderation, and forgive the person who had done him an injury, with all that freeness and cheerfulness of heart, which we may suppose one who receives a vast, an unlooked for, present, to have. Let mischances come when they would, he bore them without repining; and to preserve his friend from any danger or disgrace, he would have gone through fire itself. The greatest of his foibles, of which he had but few, was a ridiculous belief in empusas, elves, dæmons, ghosts, hobgoblins, and rambling devils. This he carried to such an extravagant pitch, that he durst as soon have *taken a bear by the tooth*, or have told his master he was an old fool, as have gone out of doors after eight at night, in the winter time, for he took it into his head, that these spectres, at the expiration of that hour, came upon the face of the earth together, divided themselves into

parties, went their different solemn rounds, chastising the wicked, and appalling the innocent, met again at the return of day, set up three horrid yells, and flew to their respective regions.

If it be possible for a person to take a strong liking to another at first sight, I mean in the way of friendship, it certainly was the case with me. Lash had something so engaging in his looks, that I singled him out directly, in my own mind, for my companion and friend; that is to say, to supply the place of my old crony long Ned; for whom I had a much greater regard, than the reader perhaps imagines.

I have heard it affirmed by many sage and learned men, that there is an *actual* communication of spirits; but whether there be a *positive* truth in the allegation, I will not pretend to say. Such profound disquisitions I shall not, by any means, try my hand at. If I did, I peradventure

should be most cruelly laughed at. Let those put their brains to work, in the investigating of abstruse and mystical matters, who may, I will endeavour to stand upon safe and sure ground, and do my best to keep the touchy cat of criticism in good humour, lest she should, in evil hour, set her sharp-pointed talons in the face of my history, and disfigure it with a thousand deep and incurable scratches.

But what I was going to remark, was, that Lash, at the very same time that I was fixing upon him, in my own thoughts, for my associate and play-fellow, was contriving with himself, how, or in what manner, he should scrape acquaintance with me. This may appear strange, very strange, indeed ; but so it was. We doubtless knew each others sentiments ; for no sooner had the hour for breaking-up school, vulgarly called loosing, arrived, and Mr. Prosody left the room, than we made up to one another, as if by instinct, and chatted together, in a mighty

free manner, till the large house-bell summoned us to dinner. Before bedtime, we were on very cordial terms; and in less than three days, our friendship was as warm and ardent, as if it had been of five years' standing.

For young Meanwell, he pleased me well enough; Drowsy was a youth whom I neither liked nor disliked; but the thievish hero, and the noble lord, I held in the highest detestation and abhorrence.

And now, my good reader, that I have introduced thee to my five chief school-fellows, it will not, I conceive, be amiss to give thee the portrait, &c. of my good master and upholder, with which we will conclude the chapter.

Mr. Gilbert Prosody was rather under the middle size, of a very robust make, and carried before him the fruits of good-living; plainly speaking, a fair round belly. His complexion partook both of

the swarthy and florid. His countenance was grave, open, and pleasing; and clearly demonstrated the great excellence of his heart. His forehead was high and projecting: he had very large cheek-bones, and rather an odd roll with his left eye. His nose, which did not want for prominence, told a tale to the world of his frequently indulging in potations of brown-stout. His mouth was not so small as to deny admission to a walnut, neither was it large enough to take in a penny-manchet. His chin was round, and had its share of fat, God wot. His neck was short and thick; and he had a chest as broad as the shield of Hector. The reader will naturally ask, with what sort of legs, all this carcass of his was carried? Not spindles, or trap-sticks, I can tell thee, but as stout a pair of bows as ever thou didst set thine eyes on. The monstrous size of his white wig, made him appear to strangers in a very grotesque light; but many of those who knew him, declared, that it not only suited with the

dignity of his profession, but also gave him a noble and venerable aspect ; though this, I apprehend, was merely a piece of waggish irony. Whenever he was pleased with any thing, he had a great trick of raising up his wig with one hand, and scratching his bald pate, for the space of five minutes, with the other ; after which, he would pull up his breeches, and cock his swivel-eye so drolly at the person or thing that caused his delight, as to tickle the fancy of every one that beheld him. Being an utter foreigner to the quirks of the world, and thoroughly free from suspicion, it was a very easy matter to deceive him ; and rather than have been guilty of an unjust or mean action, I am confident he would have suffered the most exquisite tortures. In his private attachments, he was as steady and immoveable as a rock. His philanthropy was unexceptionable ; and to the distressed, as far as his little power would go, he was an invariable friend and father. In conversation, he was judicious, sprightly, and in-

genious; and in the company of ladies, by whom he was much caressed, witty, gallant, and somewhat roguish. As a Grecian and Latinist, he was highly celebrated and extolled; and he handled the fiddle with inimitable expertness and taste. In short, his benevolent, uniform, and upright conduct, together with his rare accomplishments, procured him the affection and respect of his fellow-citizens, insomuch that he was commonly called, both by rich and poor, the wise and worthy old schoolmaster.

CHAP. VIII.

Which exhibits just as much gravity as the face of a buffoon.

HOWEVER the skilful connoisseurs of the age may censure me, for being so exact and particular in the relating of my boyish adventures, which, they may say, are trifles that might have been passed over in silence, I shall carry them on with perseverance; not that there is any thing very surprising in them, but that the world may know my follies, both great and small, from beginning to end.

It is well known, that two young friends who go much together, are seldom or never divided in opinion; generally dress and speak alike; have the same walk; and, in fact, get into almost all each other's ways. Certain it is, that the freakish spirit I had sucked from the fooleries of the two village-thunderbolts, was quick-

ly transfused into the mind of Lash ; and that I as quickly imbibed his whims, which were as many in number as the hairs of his father's beard. There was scarce a day came over our heads but we got up to the neck in some perplexity or other ; and when any of our projected measures wanted more hands than our own, we commonly put confidence in Jack Meanwell, and borrowed his assistance, which he never failed to lend with a free heart : for though he was serious in his mien, he had much gaiety and archness in his temper, and liked a little savage pastime as well as any one.

In a small house, directly opposite to Mr. Prosody's, there dwelt three of nature's unaccountables,—an old bachelor, and two old maids, who lived in a very parsimonious manner, although they had a fortune that would have made many poor families rich. They were sprung from the loins of a noted grocer and tea-dealer, who, departing this life in a

hurry, left his affairs in an intricate and disorderly state: but, by the excellent management of his son, on one hand, and the good housewifery of his two daughters, on the other, every thing was soon put to rights; and having luck on their side, they, in length of time, made a weighty purse, and retired from business.

This old bachelor, whose name was Nicholas Waspby, and his two frozen sisters were so terribly crossgrained and snappish, that to please them was as great an impossibility, as turning ice into glass; making a substantial body with air; extracting moisture from charcoal; or, lastly, striking fire with a couple of mushrooms. Their dress and customs were as strange and remarkable, as their tempers. The old fellow was sometimes clad in a tawdry suit of green velvet: sometimes, in one of a snuff-brown cloth: and frequently, in a coat of orange-coloured prunello; a waistcoat of the same stuff; and breeches of flourished pink satin; all which, for

ought I can tell, might have been wrought in the time of Arthur.

The two precious damsels were always dressed after the same fashion ; that is, in flaming silk gowns, and flowered petticoats: and they carried with them, both summer and winter, two fans that would have swelled the sails of a seventy-four. And such was the whim, or whatsoever it may be called, of these three eccentric mortals, that they never stirred out of doors, except on Sundays, and then they only walked from their own house to church and back, which was no very great distance: yet, for all that, they were generally so pestered and beset with mischievous boys and girls, and grown-up gapers, who, I believe, took them for three merry-andrews (and well they might, for I never beheld such ridiculous figures in my life), that it was as much as the old lad could do, to make a road through them with his cane.

That such gaudy pieces of ancient furniture could long escape the jokes and waggeries of school-boys, was next door to impossible.—The pew in which they sat at church, happening to be near Mr. Prosody's, we had good opportunities of reviewing them, and instead of attending to what the parson said, we were perpetually doing something or other, to vex and torment them.

Dick and I running sharply home one wet Sunday afternoon, after service, overtook, and passed by these three fanciful dolls, who were making all the haste they could to get out of the rain, for fear of having their finery spoiled. Lash chanced to be a little behind me, and as he was going by them, he accidentally strode into a deep puddle, and bespattered the poor souls all over. "J—s C—st!" cried one of the dun ladies, "I am ruined and undone! My favourite petticoat is marred—its beauty utterly defaced! Oh, that I had never put it on!" "Alack, and a

welladay!" cried the other, "the captivating lustre of my admired gown is gone for ever! Miserable wretch that I am! Only see, sister! see what a pickle I am in! and look at my poor dear brather's handsome small-clothes!"

Scarce had these trifling epithets left their mouths, when Dick's shoulders were warmly assailed with the bachelor's cane, and his ears at the same time with "Rascal! dog! whoreson! puppy! ragamuffin! dost thou see what thou hast done?" My friend made no reply, but got out of his reach as fast as he could. However, I, with more courage than prudence, being hurt to see him so abused, marched up to the old fiend, whose nether lip was quivering with rage; and putting my arms a-kimbo, "Pray, Sir," said I; "what d'ye mean by doing this?" In the room of an answer, he gave me an unconscionable knock upon the sconce, with the clumsy-end of his stick. I was going to retaliate upon his shins, but Lash arrested

my leg, and pulling me away, cried out, "Never mind the old scaramouch! Kicks would be thrown away upon such a pair of withered shanks as his. We'll give him enough for his pains in another way." He did not speak this in so low a key, but that he was heard by one of the bel-dams, who bawled out "Have a care, jackanapes, what you say, or we will get your master to exercise his birch upon your b—ch!"

As the rain fell pretty briskly, we did not think it worth our while to stand cavilling, but proceeded peaceably home, and left the three captious oddities to do the same.

Though neither of us was materially hurt, we had no notion of letting the affair rest where it did, but, on the contrary, (placing ourselves by a good fire, in a little room above stairs,) began, forthwith, to plan means of revenge, "Hang it," cried Dick, "it would not

grieve me if we had been struck by a decent fellow, but to be knocked about by such a snuffy jack-pudding as that, is enough to vex any one. The devil take them, and their clothes too! did they think nobody must get out of the wet beside themselves?" "I wish, with all my heart," said I, "you had plastered their eyes up! As for the old showman, if you had let me alone, I would have made him bellow like a bull." "Ay, I dare say you would, Godfrey," cried Lash, "but then I thought of his grey hairs. You know we should neither lift fist nor foot against an old man; if it had not been for that, hang me, if you should not have kicked the nose of your shoes off!" "Well, but I'll take good care," said I, "he shant raise a mbuntain on my head for nothing!" "No, no," cried Dick, "we will both get out of his debt, and soon too, I promise you; but we will do it in such a manner, as to hurt neither skin, blood, or bones, for, God knows, I would not strike the old fool, for

the world." "No more would I, in cold blood," said I; "but there's no telling what one might do in a passion."

So far, and no farther, had we stretched out the line of this our private conference, when lord George entered the room, and strutting up to me, with an affected shake of the head, and an unmeaning smile playing upon his face, cried, "Agad, Ranger, thought should find you here!—wanted, sir, below!" I thanked his lordship very kindly for the trouble he had put himself to, in coming to let me know, and immediately arose; but before I had moved three paces towards the door, he slipped into my chair, and fell a tittering very hard. "'Pon word," said he, "very warm seat this!—much 'bliged to you, Mister Ranger!—he, he, he!—very much 'bliged to you, indeed!" Not being in a humour to receive jests of this nature, I doubled my fist, and lent my lord an earnest blow in the face, which made him, sharply enough, change his he, he,

he! into oh, oh, oh! and leave the room with much quicker strides than he took in coming into it. "That's right, Godfrey!" cried Lash, "don't be made a fool of by any one. Who wanted his company, I wonder? Though he be a nobleman, we are as good as he, every inch of us! If he comes here again to joke us out of our seats, I'll give him a lick too, in the front of his teeth, and we shall see how he'll like that, a poor, proud, long-legged, stinking, hen-hearted, goose-pated, pitiful, lousy——" Here I clapt my hand over his mouth, (for he spoke so loud, that I was afraid of Mr. Prosody overhearing him) or, I believe he would have given his lordship as many titles as a Spanish grandee bears.

Piecing the broken cord of our conversation—"I hardly know," said I, "in what coin we should pay this old peacock. Suppose we crash his windows, Dick! That, you know, will not be hurting his corpus."—"No," cried he, "but it will

be hurting his pocket, and that will be breaking his heart, out and out! We might as well cut his throat at once as do that. For my own part, I think we may crack a sly joke upon him, without laying him open to the cold weather." "You are very careful of the old put," cried I. "I thought you would not mind what mischief we did him, so we spared his bones." "Why, I do not mind," answered Dick, very gravely: "but surely you will not be against having some fun with it! What pleasure would there be in breaking windows? None, I am sure. If we were found out, we should have to pay for them: that would be fine sport for us, with a witness." "Well, then," said I, getting rather out of humour; "how will you deal with him? I will leave the management of it intirely to you." "I have a thought in my noddle," cried Lash, after a short pause, "though, to be sure, it is rather a dirty one; but any one knows, people can't always do things so sweetly as they could wish."

"What is it?" cried I, very earnestly. "Let me hear you name it! Out with it, Dick!" "Why, if you like," cried he, "we will nail a large bunch of rags on the end of a pole, which we will souse well in the m—k—m—g, and place, when it is dark, against his door; we will then give a loud knock, and if old Nick should have the luck to come first, he will get a filthy rap in the chaps."

I laughed heartily at Dick's scheme of vengeance, and declared we would put it in practice without fail; but told him, at the same time, that I really thought we should be stunk to death. "Nay, nay," cries he, "not quite so bad as that comes to either. If the smell be past all bearing, there is such a thing as holding one's nose! But you need not let that trouble you, for only help me to make the mop, and I'll do the nasty part of the work myself. I have got an old coat up stairs that will just suit our business, when it is cut up, and we can, most likely, find a

staff in the stable; for, good Sunday night as it is, we'll make one of the three apew, before they go to bed, or my name is not Dick Lash!"

He accordingly fetched down the jacket; and having procured hammer and nails, by means of Jenny Philips, our arch-servant-girl, whom we let into the secret, we went anon into Mrs. Dido's habitation, which was only at the farther end of the yard, and finding an old besom-stale, we began our different employments without delay. As fast as I prepared the clouts, Dick nailed them on, and we completed the matter without the least interruption or disturbance. The old mare though, had certainly a strong suspicion that we were doing no good, for, every now and then, she would turn about her head, look at us with great seriousness, scrape one of her fore-feet over the pavement, and neigh very crossly, as much as to say, "Rascals! what the devil are you about?"

Phœbus having scotched the wheels of his flaming chariot, we began to bestir ourselves in the performance of the second part of the freak. Dick, with heroic heart, seized the dreadful instrument of revenge, rushed into the scented palace of exoneration, plunged it deep in the excremental magazine, shouldered it, as a soldier does his musket, and marched, with all the pomp and majesty of Achilles, to the place of action. But I rather think he did not like his post over well: for I could hear him, as we were walking on, spit out frequently, and say to himself, in a low voice, "Lord have mercy upon us, how terribly it stinks!" For my own share, I kept far enough from him, and so escaped the noxious perfume entirely.

The street being clear of people, he placed the nose-offending mop against the bachelor's door, and laying hold on the knocker, gave such a rap-a-rap, tap, tap, tap, as brought a light in the lobby in an instant. "Who's there?" cried old

Wasphy, within. "Who's there, pray?" "O dear brather!" cried one of the sisters; "'tis only a run-away knock! For Gad's sake, don't open the door!" Some dirty unlucky lads!" cried the other; "I heard them run past the window."

Lash, perceiving the scheme would not take, unless something further was done, cried out, in the voice of an old woman who has lost her teeth (for in mimicry of that kind he was very happy), "Good people, I am a stranger in town, and have——" "Get about your business, you impudent trull!" interrupted one of the ladies: "We have nothing to do with strangers here!" "Hush, sister!" said the bachelor; "Let us hear what the woman has to say for herself!" "Pray, kind sir," cried Dick, applying his mouth to the key-hole; "would you be so obliging, as to tell me where-about in this street, a gentleman of the name of Wasphy, formerly a grocer and tea-dealer, lives?" "Why, I am the very person," answered

he. "Ha, how glad I am that I have found you, sir!" cried Lash." "I bring news that will make both you and your two worthy sisters dance for joy!" "News, say you? news, say you?" cried all the three, with great eagerness. "Oh, yes," said Dick," great news, indeed! You will be the richest family in all the city."

This was touching the right string. They now had nothing but 'good woman!' in their mouths; and there was such a confused clatter of tongues, and so much scuffling in the lobby, to open the door, that I had like to have forgot myself, and thought I was in the midst of a big mob.

"The lard bless me!" cried old Nicholas, fumbling at the door; "I am so put about by these strange tidings, that I hardly know what I do or say. I am sorry to keep you waiting in the night air, excellent lady! 'Ad rat the bolt! I wish it was at the devil! I declare I've lost all my strength." "Good now, brather Ni-

cholas," cried one of the maiden goddesses, "let me try if I can master it!" "Hold your tongue, Dorothy," answered he, "and have a little patience! I shall do it in time, I warrant you I shall. I am only afraid the good lady will take cold. We will get a locksmith to-morrow, I am determined. How often have I been plagued with this abominable bolt! I will conquer you, gentleman, before I have done with you yet! Now do be quiet, sister! and let me manage matters myself. Was ever any thing so provoking? Can't stir it! Gad's curse light on you, but I will though!"

While the bachelor was thus employed, we walked to the opposite side of the street, and watched, with impatience, for the sequel. The bolt was at last forced, and made a noise exactly like the report of a pistol; the door opened with a loud creaking noise, and the insufferable apparatus fell in the face of the anxious cormorant, with a terrible slap. He roar-

ed so grievously, and the two sister-Jezebels squawled with such sympathetic vehemence, that people came running from all quarters, to see what murder was committing, and Dick and I betook ourselves away, abundantly pleased with the fortunate issue of our sweet contrivance.

It frequently happens, that part, if not all of the mischief which a person projects against another, falls, at the time he is putting it in force, on his own pate. Poor Lash, not being sufficiently careful in the carrying of the dripping nuisance, got his locks pretty well bedewed, so that it was not very safe, for one who had a keen nose, to stand near him. I advised him, before he went into the house, to immerge his head in the cistern, for fear our fellow boarders should smell him ; but Dick had no appetite for such a cold way of sweetening himself, saying, that those who did not like the scent, might keep a proper distance from him.

As I apprehended, so it fell out. He had no sooner placed himself among them, than they began to move away from him, as they would have done from a bugbear, or any other frightful object. "Out upon't, you infamous stinkard!" cried Pussely. "Oh, the demn'd pig!" exclaimed Bubble. "Augh, moy Gaud, he has befoüled himself!" whined Drowsy. Meanwell, for his part, said nothing but—"Pah!" and clapping hand to nose, gave me an arch look, which seemed to imply—"Where, in the name of fortune, have you been?" Dick all the while fixed his eyes steadfastly in the fire, and appeared quite down in the mouth. They quickly took advantage of his dumpish mood, and began to play so hard upon him, that I pitied his case most heartily, and was resolved, at all hazards, to take up the cudgel for him. According to this, I leaped suddenly from my seat, and cocking my hat valiantly, swore, without preface, that I would drub the first person who cast another jest at him, out of his

skin. This tremendous threat did my business at once. They drew in their horns in a twinkling, and thought proper to be silent on the stench-subject the whole of the night; so Dick, who had promised himself but little comfort, brightened up, and sat very much at his ease.

CHAP. IX.

In which a notable trial, and other sober matters, are set forth, with an exactness and judgment which we defy all the historians in the universe to outvie.

IT is the avowed opinion of most wise men, that a suspicious person can possess but few good qualities, forasmuch as it is the consciousness of his own imperfections, which prompts him to distrust his fellow-creatures in general, and fancy every man who appears thoughtful, a designing knave. It is extremely unsafe to make a friend of such a one, and not less so, to make use of any language but plain English before him; for if you happen to hint, in the course of conversation, that you know a certain person (without mentioning his name) who is an arrant rogue, an hypocrite, a busy-body, or a block-head, it is a hundred to one but he takes it to himself, and consequently will care-

fully seek occasion to squabble with you. And if he observe two persons, or more, discoursing in whispers, he pricks up his ears as wistfully as a strayed dog does at the distant cry or whistle of his master, and is upon the itch to disturb them; strongly surmising, that they are either speaking about him, that is to say, making free with his character, or plotting mischief. We need only take a short trip into the world, and we shall, without much trouble, find plenty of this cast. But there is a kind of second-rate suspicion, which the best and noblest minds are, in some measure, obnoxious to. I mean, the laying an injury which we receive in the dark, at the door of him who hath formerly done us an ill turn, for no other reason, than that we consider him our enemy. This, though it does not proceed, like the other, from self-dishonesty, is far from being justifiable, and we certainly ought to guard against it, with all our might.

It is with the greatest concern and reluctance, I tell thee, reader, that the sage and magnanimous Nicholas Waspby was not wholly free from this second-rate suspicion, which sometimes obliged him to frame a few inoffensive fibs, in order to make his accusation (for if he suspected a person, he never failed to arraign him) appear indisputable.

As we were all six dispatching our breakfast next morning, there came a thundering knock to the street door, and presently after, we received a summons from Mr. Prosody, to attend him in the parlour. He, being a great observer of punctuality himself, would always have his commands obeyed with speed, on pain of rod-castigation, we therefore went to know his pleasure, with part of our breakfast in our mouths. Who should we find sat with him but old Waspby, with a very pale countenance, and a silken napkin tied about his head. The reader may have a shrewd guess in what sort of a

pickle my friend and I felt ourselves. If my visage was as long and woful as his, I question whether we should not have made gravity himself shew his teeth.

“Adso boys!” cried Mr. Prosody in apparent discomposure, “this gentleman informs me, that two of you, between the hours of six and seven last night, did wilfully and maliciously besmear his face with ordure.” Besmear, sir!” snapped the bachelor, rising from his seat; “I don’t know what you call besmearing! Gad-zounds, sir! if I had been an onion bed, they could not have laid it on thicker. My face was covered, sir, entirely covered! I was three full hours in washing it off, sir! Couldn’t get a wink of sleep of all night, for vomiting, sir! I thought, every moment, my heart’s-blood would have come up. You see, sir, I am reduced to a mere skeleton! Oh, it was a murderous action—a most diabolical action—a wicked and unheard-of action. Every one cries open shame of it. My poor sis-

ters, as well as myself, were almost killed by the stench. But I look to you, sir, for justice, and justice I will have." "Be assured you shall, Mr. Waspby," cried our master;" but which of the gentlemen, pray, are the malefactors?" "Oh, these are the dogs!" cried old Nicholas, pulling Dick and me out from the rest;" "These are the cursed doers of the deed! These are the foul assassins! They are Satan's own! They were sent into the world as a curse to the young, and a torment to the old. Rascality is written in their faces! Nay, look sir! Did you ever, in your life, behold such a pair of sneaking culprits?" "Are you positive, friend," said Mr. Prosody, "that they are the true offenders?" "Positive?" echoed Waspby: "that's a pretty question, indeed! D'ye doubt my truth, sir? I say, I believe them to be the scoundrels who—" "Oh, you only believe them to be!" interrupted Mr. Gilbert. "Then you are not confident?" "Pish, how you talk, man!" cried the bachelor. "Are we sure

of any thing in this world? Nevertheless, I am a man of sound veracity; whatever you may think, sir. I never, to the best of my knowledge, was caught in a lie in my life." "I dare say not, sir," said Mr. Prosody; "but surely you cannot blame me for putting an equitable question to you! *Ridiculum est te illud me admognere.*" "I know nothing about your *ill odds and bad money*, not I," cried Nicholas; "but this I know, that if you do not pepper their backsides for them, it will be a burning shame."

Mr. Prosody said in reply, that as it was not compatible with the constitution of England, to punish a man unheard; so neither was it the place of a school-master, to flog a boy, without having proper evidence of the offence he is charged with. "Fine sort of doings, indeed!" cried the mortified bachelor. "So a man that has been seventy-four years in the world, must be jested with by two little blackguards who have hardly cast

their teeth! Oh, what a degenerate age! I must own, sir, I thought you would have known better, than to suffer them to do such a scandalous thing with impunity." "You wrong me, Mr. Waspby," cried the pedagogue. "If you can make it appear that they are the real transgressors, you shall certainly have the redress you ask; until then, I cannot, neither will I, stir in the business: for, as the great Tully says—*Qui adipisci veram gloriam volunt, justitiæ fungantur officiis*. "A pox on your gibberish!" cried the bachelor, malapertly; "nobody can understand one half of what you talk about! 'Tis very odd that people can't speak English when they open their mouths."

"*Hei mihi!*" exclaimed Mr. Prosody, throwing up his eyes to the ceiling, and stroking his beard. "And *hey my eye!*" retorted the crabbed hero; "I think I may say that with as great propriety as yourself! Little did I imagine that I should live to see such brazen times as these.

God keep me from such a barbarous race of mortals! Nature is crippled, and goes upon a crutch: the devil has his scouts, agents, and emissaries, in every part of the earth: an honest man can't wag a stride, without treading upon serpents, snakes, vipers, toads, and adders: he must bear injury upon injury, forsooth, without complaining! Must suffer himself to be maimed, bruised, splashed, and dunged upon, with patience! If he demand justice, he is jeered, mocked, and made game of!" "Adso, neighbour!" cried Mr. Prosody, very calmly, "do not put yourself in a passion! Be moderate, friend: quietness, at all times, answers better than outrage: your own experience will tell you that." "Like enough, like enough!" answered he; "and common reason will tell you, that those two imps, from the kingdom of brimstone, deserve nine thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine hard lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails, which I do desire you will adminster, without more ado." "Nay, sir," returned

the schoolmaster, "I have told you my determination. I shall not swerve from what I have already said. The question is, whether you saw them about your house, when you opened the door?" "Pugh! what has seeing them to do with it?" answered Nicholas; "I tell you, absolutely, that they, and only they, are the filthy caitiffs. Take my word for it, neighbour, and let them be immediately horsed. It is your positive duty to obey me, as being your senior." "You would make a very arbitrary king, Mr. Waspby," cried the pedagogue; "I must confess I should not like to be under your government. If every man were of your way of thinking, I apprehend we should have very little order or equity in the kingdom." "What d'ye mean by that, sir?" cried the bachelor, in a sharp tarty tone. "I mean," replied Mr. Prosody, "that you would trample justice under foot, and put her whip in the merciless hand of vengeance." "Gad confound you!" ejaculated Waspby: "if it were manners,

I would tell you, that you were an infamous falshood-speaker! You never, in all your born days, knew me to act but with consummate rectitude and honour. I am just in all my dealings, and that's more than most people can say." "Accusing, without being able to prove, is no great mark of conscientiousness," returned our good master. "I have proof sufficient!" cried the bachelor, "since it comes to that! Yes, yes, I can shew proof enough." "Where is it, pray?" said Mr. Prosody, "I should be glad to see it." "See it!" echoed the bachelor, "you shall see it, sir, and know it too; you may take your Bible-oath of that! I will convince you—I will disperse all your scruples and doubts—you shall no longer have occasion to suspect the truth and honesty of my charge. When I have told you all, you will be ready to lick my shoes, I know you will!" "I shall be very forward," cried the good schoolmaster, "to make an humble apology for my distrust, but do not let me interrupt you; I pray you, proceed!"

"Know then, sir," cried the old fellow, after having hawked up a quantity of phlegm that stuck in his throat, "that as I and my two sisters were returning from church, yesterday afternoon, that infernal son of Belzebub (pointing at Dick) put his foot into a splash, and covered us, from top to toe, with dirt. If it had been an accident, I should not have noticed it; but as I plainly saw it was done on purpose, I took the liberty of giving him one slight stroke with my cane. Upon which, this dirty coxcomb (tweaking me by the ear) interfered, and sticking up his impudent face, called me all the foul names he could possibly invent. You may be certain, sir, I did not like, nor would any one else have liked, to be prated to by such a young sinner as that; I therefore was going to bestow my stick upon him too, but he got out of my reach, and heaving up a large paving-stone, threatened to split my scull:—will you believe it, sir? the villainous dog threatened to shatter my scull. The other ruffian told him not

to fling it, but come away ; which advice he thought fit to take. They then began, sir, to whisper. I suppose they thought I did not hear what they said, but they were mistaken. Yes, you scoundrels! (turning to us) you thought I was deaf and stupid, but I'll soon convince you to the contrary. I have kept in my head every syllable that was spoken—pat ; yes, I have ; to your confusion, wretches, I have. They said, sir, (turning again to Mr. Prosody) that they would, before many hours were over, give me a thing to smell at, that would confine me to my bed for a twelve-month. This thing they spoke of, was nothing else but the filthy mop : I would swear it, upon all the books that ever were opened and shut.” “ And I do believe,” cried Pursely, to the great disturbance of us both, “ that the gentleman is right ; for Richard smelt so strong last night, that there was no bearing near him.” This affirmation was quickly backed by Bubble, who cried out, “ ’Pon honour, stunk worse than a jakes !” “ Where are you now,

Mister Schoolmaster?" exclaimed the overthwart bachelor, with an exulting sneer. "You see the folly of disbelieving a man of truth! I hope you are satisfied, sir! You cannot sure have the least doubt of their guilt now." "I am sorry to say, I have not," answered Mr. Prosody, "and I ask your pardon for having disputed your bare word. Their posteriors shall now atone for the fault." "Ay, now that is something like!" cried old Nicholas, rubbing his hands. "Now you act as you ought to do!"

Preparations were instantly made for the inflicting of the dolorous chastisement. Dick, being the oldest of the two, was to be flogged first: and his breeches being stripped down to his knees, he was put upon the back of Drowsy; and Meanwell, Purely, and his lordship, had the honourable posts of leg and arm-holders.

Mr. Prosody having brandished his ungainly rod in the air, was within a hair's

breadth of giving the leading scourge, when Dick, with great presence of mind, bawled out, "Stop your hand, sir! Consider what you are doing! Ah, master! have you forgot what you said t'other day, when you saw, in the street, a hard-hearted carter whipping his poor horse? Didn't you say, sir, that 'twas a great piece of cruelty to strike a *dumb creature*? Besides, sir, I am innocent—and so is Godfrey." "Adso!" cried Mr. Gilbert, smiling at Dick's pertness; "how can you be innocent, sirrah, when the boys say you smelled as strong as mustard?" "I know I stunk, sir;" cried Lash, in serious earnest; "and very ill too: but I could not help it—indeed, I could not. I assure you, sir, I never meddled with any dirt—not I. The smell, sir, was owing to my breaking wind backwards." "If that be the case," said Mr. Proseody, laying down the twiggen instrument; "I dare say you are innocent. But why did you not mention this before?" "Because sir," answered Dick, with his wonted facetiousness; "the

old gentleman's angry looks frightened my tongue so ill, that it durst not stir." "Set him down—set him down, boys!" cried our worthy and conscientious master; "I find we must look a little further into this matter." "The deuce we must!" quoth the bachelor, foaming at the mouth with vexation; "Then give me leave to tell you, sir, that you are the vilest, quibbling, prevaricating fellow I ever met with! You first say one thing, and then another: you play fast and loose, sir! A pretty sort of a person, truly, to have the care of youth! You connive at their wickednesses, sir; I will go so far as to tell you that! You teach them all kinds of immorality: you are leading 'em, step by step, to perdition: I see it, sir! I see it clear enough. Fie upon't! Fie upon't! O virtue, virtue, virtue! thou mayest go thy way; for men, now-a-days, care very little about thee." "True, friend;" cried Mr. Prosody, with a very placid voice and countenance; "*Virtus parvo pretio licet omnibus.*" "You talk a very great deal

of *nonsensibus* and *stuffibus*, if you know what that is!" retorted Waspby, growing ten times more furious: "but you need not think to browbeat me with your gingerbread-lingo. I am not the ideot you take me to be: no, my good neighbour; you have got the wrong sow by the ear! With all your fine puff-paste scholarship, I have as much solid sense in my little finger, as you have in your whole carcass. You have, in this instance, shewn yourself to be a downright nincompoop! But I will report you! The reputation of your school will soon be at stake: I will do for it, sir! I will give it its death-blow! I will throw that lousy wig of yours in the flames of disgrace! Yes, I will, sir! I will—by Gad, I will!" So saying, he took his hat, and stalked out of the house.


"Adso!" said Mr. Prosody, looking after him, very quietly; "what a passion the old man is in. I did not know that my wig harboured vermin before!"

The time for going to school being now at hand, he ordered all of us to leave the room; and cocking his eye at me, repeated, with strong emphasis, this sentence from Cicero—*Adolescentis est majores natu revereri*: in English—It is the duty of a youth, to pay respect to his elders.

Dick and I were very much afraid we should be brought to trial again; but the bachelor, no good thanks to his clemency, thought fit to keep his chagrin to himself; and Mr. Prosody consequently made no farther mention of the affair.

Notwithstanding we had had so narrow an escape of being sorely flogged, we could not let the old fellow rest, but must needs play him an arch trick every now and then, by way of putting him in mind of old favours, and, as luck would have it, we always evaded punishment.

This gay capricious conduct of mine procured me a good round number of



enemies, but a very few friends. Among the latter of these, was Mr. Prosody's merry servant wench, Jénny Philips, who, to do her justice, possessed the best of tempers, and had a face and person fine enough to have forced up the bristles of the secret boar of envy. She sung and danced delightfully, and read with judgment, elegance, and ease. She had likewise made some proficiency in the French language, was an excellent hand at embroidery and net-work, and had many other acquirements equally handsome and polite.

Let not my fashionable readers, start, laugh, fleer, or titter, at what I here write! She was nothing but a common servant, 'tis true; but that that *dirty* consideration may not put them out of countenance, I must beg their acceptance of another, of a more *delicate* and *refined* turn, namely, that she was worthy a much better *fate*. Besides stuffing me, in private, with the niceties of the larder,

she always used her utmost endeavours to help me out of any intricacy into which my drunken stars led me, and, in a word, did me a thousand kind and obliging offices. If there be any truth in woman, I not only gained the heights of her friendship and good-will, but marched, without opposition, into the very centre of her heart, and (as a writer of bombastic romance would phrase it) bore away the *honiéd diadem* of her softest affection.

She one night, by the wonderful power of something that I am not able to account for, lured me to her bed, where I lay very submissively in her embrace for more than an hour; but when the unseemly part of the play came forward, I broke from her in the greatest trepidation and disorder—flew, like lightning, to my own chamber—crept frantically into my hammock—covered myself over head in the clothes—and panted, shook, burnt, sweat, and sighed, throughout the night, to such violent degrees, that I was as feeble and

spiritless the next day, as one just recovered from a typhodes.

Not in the least disheartened by my abrupt departure from her, she called together all the forces that wantonness and stratagem could supply her with, and strenuously attacked me on all sides, with the *trenchant javelins* of a fair exposed bosom, tender and endearing looks, and soft coaxing words, but she proved equally unsuccessful. I retreated from her with almost as much confusion as I had done the time before, yet still was she bent on my overthrow. Reinforced with a fresh and numerous artillery of fascination, she, in unguarded hour, made a third bold essay upon me, and I must frankly own, was crowned with victory. So hot and heavy was the fire of her subduing persuasions, that, after a brave resistance of near half an hour, I surrendered, and cancelled, in a trice, a virtue which few youths, if tempted, have the power to keep, but, on the contrary, commonly

part with it without any reluctance whatsoever.

From that day in which I lost my innocence, (if such a term be not too effeminate) I grew exceedingly restless in my mind, and quite out of humour with the toil of school-business. To say the truth, I fancied myself a man, *in every sense of the word*, though, by the bye, I had not reached my sixteenth year; and was heartily vexed that I should be any longer treated as a boy.

Jenny turned her victory to such good account, that she had me completely at her beck and call, as the phrase is, and I was somewhat too intimate with her for the space of two months, at the end of which period, however, we were providentially separated; for she one day happened to have some hasty words with her master about house-keeping, and making use of much pert language, he, without giving her the customary warning, paid her her

wages, and discharged her. Not being able to get another place in town, went over to her friends, who dwelt in Northampton, and so the first and end of my career of my incontinence ended, with much privacy as it began.

CHAP. X.

In which is related a tragi-comic and ever-memorable adventure, as some readers will probably say, in the style of romance.

JACK Meanwell was exceedingly fond of angling; and, as he was always agreeable to whatever plays Dick and I proposed, we very often, though the sport, if it can be so called, was not much to our liking, accompanied him to a large river, rather better than seven miles from the city, which was said to abound with trout and gudgeon, but we never caught any great quantity of either one sort or the other.

All Saints'-days and Saturdays being holidays at school, (for Mr. Prosody was not like some rigid masters, who keep their scholars to close slavish study, scarce allowing them time to eat their meals, but required of us no more than mis-

be performed without either hurting the health or wearying the mind ; being of opinion, that a little indulgence and liberty, at times, made boys go about their work more willingly, and get faster forward, than they would by harsh treatment and constant confinement) Jack had frequent opportunities of enjoying his favourite diversion, and we commonly set out at break of day, and did not return before dusk in the evening.

One dry sultry night about midsummer, as we were making the best of our way home, with hungry bellies and an empty basket, after having fished for upwards of fourteen hours, there burst out of a barn, as sheer as lightning, a boisterous farmer, through whose territories we happened to be passing, who, running up to us with hot looks, laid about him with a flail (without telling us why or wherefore) so savagely, that we quickly altered our gait, and strode away like three pursued stags. And we were very prudent in so

doing, for I truly think, if we had staid to ask any questions whatsoever about the matter, we should have stood a fair chance of having our pates demolished.

The fellow gave us hard chace for the length of five or six fields, but by making pretty good use of our legs, we left him far enough behind. He stopped all on a sudden, and sending a hearty curse after us, scratched his head out of chaste vexation, and turned upon his heel. As for us, we repaired to, and seated ourselves under a garden wall, not so much to recover our breath, as to extract a thorn, which, in our flight, had found entrance into the foot of Lash, and which gave him infinite pain.

The merry-chanting lark was going her last lofty journey in the air; the twittering martens, with fleet skimming wings, were making dreadful havoc among the swarming gnats; the loud whistling thrush, with grateful echoing notes, was bid-

ding a short good b'ye to the jolly-faced sun, which glared just above the horizon, taking as it were a parting peep at the various objects of its bounteous warmth; when Meanwell, commencing philosopher all at once, opened in raptures the folding-doors of his rhetoric, and began to expatiate on the ravishing beauties of nature. "Who, that could avoid it," cried he, "would live in the thick dirty smoke of a town? Would to God I had a will of my own! I know where I would always be. Let the lovers and admirers of bustle have their stomachs full of it, and God give them the good of it! but quietness and the country for my money. Hear, how joyfully the sweet birds sing and warble! See, how beautifully the sun is sinking beneath yonder ridge of hills! Look, in what a loving manner that little harmless colt is trotting after its mother! Behold, how prettily those bleating lambs lie in different clusters upon that bank! And look at those three spotted cows, with full hanging udders, quenching their

thirst in that clear winding brook ! What pavement, even if it were of solid gold or polished marble, is half so rich and handsome as this green meadow ? What buildings are so magnificent and superb, as the prospect we now have before us ? Can you, my companions, conceive any thing more lovely than the sky is at present ? Oh, how finely it is streaked and marbled ! I could keep mine eyes upon it for ever. Where is there an embroidered carpet so pleasing to the sight, as a field covered with daisies and butter-flowers ? And where, let me ask you, is there a pyramid or obelisk so grand and majestic, as that large spreading oak on the right of us ? Do but observe that little laborious bee, how merrily he is finishing his day's work among yonder tuft of clover ! Listen to his humming song ! It seems to tell us, that he is as fresh as he was when he began in the morning ; and that he could, if it were not for the coming of night, continue his industry many hours longer with ease.

How pure and delicious the air smells! No spices, scents, or perfumes, from Arabia, can equal it! The steam from a roasted goose, hare, pullet, or partridge, when I am hungry, does not give me one quarter such gratification! I am now in my glory! The beauty of each surrounding object fills me at once with admiration and delight!

Dick and I were marvellously surprised to hear Jack run on in such a lofty enthusiastic manner as this, and gave him credit for it in the best terms we could. But before we had concluded our commendation, our attention was suddenly drawn away by a faint distant sound within the garden-wall, proceeding, in the form of chat, from the lungs of human bodies. We all three listened very mindfully. The voices came nearer and nearer, and were, at last, local, and perfectly articulate. Nothing now but the wall seemed to divide us and the persons from whom they issued, so that we soon found out who and what they

were. Without periphrasis or circumlocution, they were two lovers, up to the armpits in a courting tete-a-tete!

Meanwell, taking his eyes from the charming things that had stirred up his oratory, pointed first to his mouth, and then to his ear, as signs for us to be silent and hearken. Dick, with a keen desirous look, nodded obedience; and I, with great gravity of heart, fetched a long sigh, for, just at that moment, Jenny Philips, the girl with whom I had lately been connected, flew athwart my fancy, and put me in mind of her manifold favours.

“Ah, my dearest Bella!” cried the male-voice, in a fond amorous tone, “if you pity my madness, (for madness it certainly is, to love as I do) let me not remain in these torturing flames of suspense! What cruelty it is, thus to pain me! One moment I freeze with despair, another, I burn with hope. Your indirect

answers to the important questions I put to you, give me unspeakable torment. Let me know my doom at once, I entreat you! Why, why will you trifle with me? Tell me, lady, do I love to no purpose? Is my passion an unfortunate one? Will it not find shelter? Oh say, am I to be a wretched or a happy man?"

"Mercy, how you tease me, captain!" cried the female-voice, with some degree of tartness, "I don't know what you would have me to say, not I. I shall be quite out of humour with you soon, indeed I shall! Have I not repeatedly told you, that my father has laid his commands upon me, not to encourage any gentleman whatsoever for two long years to come? I should be a very wicked ungrateful daughter, indeed, were I to act in direct opposition to his will."

"His will, Bella," cried the lover, with a sigh, "is a very barbarous one. It will make you into a murderer; for

before one half of that cruel time is spent, I shall be mouldering in my grave."

"Ridiculous!" cried the lady, "I am astonished, Mr. Palmer, that you should talk so sillily! You that are a hale robust man, talk of dying for love! Upon my word, captain, you would fain make me believe strange things."

"I do not wish, Miss Trevor," said the enamoured gentleman, "to make you believe any thing but the real truth. I hope you do not consider what I say as the idle and unmeaning prate of gallantry?" "Far from it, sir," replied the female, with a little more gravity of accent. "I am persuaded—at least I think, you are one of the sincere sort of men. Not to acknowledge the kind attention you pay me, would be a piece of unpardonable ingratitude. I respect you, sir, for it. Your kindness merits the warmest return. I could say more—but pray, excuse me!" "Nay, 'tis impossible!" cri-

ed the gentleman ; " I cannot excuse you ! You must, you shall proceed ! Oh, do not, my beloved angel, let me have occasion to sue again ! Have pity on my anguished heart ! Alas, you know not what I suffer ! The killing tortures of the rack are far less severe, than the arrows of doubt and fear. Since I do homage to your accomplishments and charms, and since you condescend to esteem me for it, why refuse me a boon which you may with such ease bestow ? A few candid words from those dear lips, are all I ask, all I desire ! "

" Positively, sir," cried the obdurate fair one, " I shall leave you to address the trees, if you do not instantly change the subject. 'Tis useless to plague me in this incessant manner. You know my father's injunctions ; there needs no repetition. Whatever are his motives, he must be obeyed. Independently of my duty, I have passed my word that I would follow his directions, no matter whether it

be a wise or an absurd one; therefore, do not, I beg of you, urge me more!" "Cruel, hard-hearted girl!" exclaimed the suppliant wooer; "thy obstinacy plants such various thorns in my breast, that life begins to grow hateful to me. I am a distracted man! Happiness spits in my face, and calls me wretch! Misery takes me by the hand, and drags me through all her dreadful labyrinths with silent fierceness and rage. The heavens cursed me ere I 'scaped the womb! I have reason that perpetually harasses me, and feelings that will anon destroy me! Oh, I cannot, will not exist! 'Twere better to fall by mine own hand, than lead a life of eternal wretchedness."

"Good heavens, Mr. Palmer!" cried the incompassionate wounder, "how strangely you speak! What an huddle of incoherent ideas you harbour! The language you utter, the weakest woman in the world would blush to be the owner of. Upon my life and honour, I shall

begin to think, that the good opinion I have so far entertained of your understanding, was sorrowfully formed. Pray do, for your own credit's sake, send away those idle maggots that have crawled into your poor head! for, believe me, they will become the active spirit and dignified character of a soldier."

"Though every word you speak," cried the highflown suiter, "tears up my soul; and fills me with all-burning distraction; yet, when I view those lovely pouting lips, my heart forgets its grief, and fain would urge me to impress them with my own."

"By my faith," said Meanwell to me, in a whisper, "the gentleman will talk in fair blank-verse by and by!"

"The more I gaze upon your beauty," continued the pompous lover, "the more my desire to be indissolubly united to you increases. O, revoke that detested

promise you made to your too arbitrary father! and save one who rates you far beyond his own life, from raging madness and death! My destiny is in your hands! You alone, on earth, have the power to damn or bless me: you know it, Bella—you know it! Ah, how wretched is the man who loves in vain! Pardon my wandering fancy! I could wish to be rational, but alas, my evil genius will not allow me! The darting brilliancy of those heavenly eyes, kindles within my heart ten thousand scorching fires! The throbbing motion of that fair downy bosom, acts as bellows to the flames, and makes them rage with redoubled violence! I pant, I long to clasp you in my arms! My taunted patience sickens! The unruly passion defies the power of reason, and bears its furious sway uncontrouled! My hunger is great and pressing, and requires immediate allayment."

At the end of these sudden rigmarole expressions, I suppose the man of the

sword laid, or attempted to lay, a wanton finger upon the stubborn lady, for she cried out, with much disorder of voice, "Fie, sir! fie! Your distance, Mr. Palmer! I beg, sir—nay, this is unpardonable! Such freedoms! I vow you shall not! I insist—" Here her utterance was suddenly stifled; so, I conjectured the outrageous gallant was committing osculation upon her charming lips.

After a momentary pause, she spoke again, but in such a low trembling tone, that I could not make out a single word. The gentleman said something in reply, but was equally unintelligible. Another pause ensued; during which the male sighed most bitterly. At length, breaking into his old raving strain, he distinctly spoke to the following purport. "Distracting woman! what savage fancy influences you to repel the ardor of my affection? Am I such a monster in your eyes, that you cannot endure my touch? Is my form so hideous, as to make the bright

vermilion vanish from your cheeks, and the transcendent lustre from your eyes? Am I too base to be indulged with one tender word? Would my alliance with your family pollute its respectability? But why do I ask all this? 'Tis plain my love is scorned, my agony unpitied! I speak to a deaf unfeeling rock, on which 'twill be my fate to split! My teemful heart, galled to its deepest extremity, must now let out its excruciating fires! It can contain them no longer: 'tis swelled to its utmost bulk.—If I act contrary to the trust you have reposed in me, (added he, dropping his voice into a soft and scarcely audible key) and avail myself of this opportunity,—I say, of this opportunity, madam, you will have no one to blame but yourself. We are now alone, Miss Trevor! Your chastity is in my power! You may scream till you are breathless, but we are at too great a distance from the house for any one to hear you. Consider that, and tremble!"

If this sudden change in the language of the officer, was a surprise and shock to us, what must it have been to Miss Trevor? In a faltering and barely articulate voice, she cried out, "Gracious God! you surely will not attempt—" "Yes, madam," cried he, interrupting her, "I will not only attempt, but triumph." "Oh, Palmer, Palmer!" cried she, "and will your conscience really allow you to act so base, so dishonourable a part?" "It will, it will," answered he. "Your unprecedented immanity deserves a still worse penalty."

These words were followed with a dead silence on both sides, which lasted about half a minute; after which the defenceless young lady gave a faint shriek, and in a voice that was muffled with fright, cried, "Have mercy! have reason! have pity! For God's sake, desist!" "By all the heavenly host," exclaimed the madman, without lending an ear to what she said, "I will have no struggling! Do not

provoke me to use harsher means. Nay, this pertinacity, madam, as you are situated, is utterly useless and absurd. Submit this instant, or look for violence!" "Base dissembling monster!" cried Miss Trevor, in the same broken accent, "is this your honourable love? Stand off, sir! Villain, release my arms! Help, help! Will no one deliver me? Oh, my father! where are you? Help! Assistance! Help!" Here her soft feeble voice ceased, and the unmanly soldier began to vent more of his pithless jargon.

The rustling of the shrubs in the garden told us, that he was now doing his utmost to accomplish his abominable purpose. Dick and I, for Meanwell was rather of a tame pusillanimous turn, inflamed with indignation at the rascally conduct of the man, on one hand, and touched with the distressful condition of the woman, on the other, sprang both at once, without uttering a syllable, upon the wall, and were over in the garden in a trice. Never

did any poor lady stand so greatly in need of help as Miss Trevor. The villain, for 'twould be a reproach to the name of gentleman, were I to favour him with it any longer, had got her in a position too gross for even the pen of a *Rochester* to describe. There was not a moment's time for delay. Urged by the spur of humanity, and regardless of every danger, we flew at the ignoble hero like two exasperated bull-dogs—dragged him, with great desperateness, from the exhausted female—scuffled stoutly with him for about a minute—and then flung him, though sadly against his mind, upon the ground.

Our sudden appearance, together with the unmerciful grasps we gave his throat, so terribly surprised and intimidated him, that the largest part of his strength forsook him. He would gladly have acknowledged our kindness with his sword, but Lash, who was fully aware of his intention, drew it instantly from the scabbard, whilst I secured his hands; and flourishing it, in

a bold chivalric manner, over him, cried out, "Move at your peril, sir devil!" Notwithstanding he was large enough in stature to have made both of us pay dear for our interference, yet, as I have just now said, he was too much confounded to exert his full prowess; consequently we were above a match for him.

While Lash was threatening to send him to the hot dominions of his cloven-footed majesty, I very manfully vented a few of my shrillest shouts, in order to alarm the house, which stood, almost obscured by trees, at the top of the garden. A loud clapping of doors, and a confused rattle of tongues, soon gave me notice, that my cries were heard; I therefore continued them; and in a few seconds, an old gouty gentleman, with a blunderbuss in his hand, and a great crowd of footmen and maid-servants, brandishing fire-pokers, knives, brooms, shovels, spits, and other utensils, presented themselves to our view. They hastened directly towards

us ; and no sooner did the grey-haired gentleman behold the half-dead lady, who was leaning against the hedge, than he let the fusee fall to the ground—hobbled up to her as fast as his swollen legs would permit him—clasped her in his infirm arms—kissed her pallid cheek—and looked withal so dotingly upon her, that 'twas no hard matter to guess how nearly she was related to him. The attention of the armed domestics was firmly rivetted on Dick, the *hero* in the *scarlet coat*, and myself. Without giving themselves time for consideration, or even asking a single question, the crazy-pated females, casting soft looks of pity at the fallen captain, were preparing to let us taste the flavour of their brooms ; but the men, who did not suffer cautious reason to give place to disorderly rashness, had no notion of transacting business in the dark ; therefore, having in some degree quelled the blind fury of their fellow servants, began to make enquiries into the matter.

We told them, in but a few words, that we had rescued the lady from stupration. They needed no better a clearing up. Such was the incensement of the head-strong women, that Lash and I had now our hands full in preventing them from knocking our prisoner's brains out. Indeed, if part of them had not gone to the assistance of their young mistress, who had fainted in her father's arms, I have good grounds to believe, that the spot where he then lay on, would, in spite of our teeth, have been his death-bed

As soon as the maids became a little orderly, and the young lady was brought to herself, we delivered the quaking captain into the custody of two of the stoutest men, who, though he had acted in a way so derogatory to the name of soldier, gave him no unmannerly usage, but, on the contrary, held him respectfully by the laps of his coat. We forthwith approached the now-recovered Miss Trevor, and holding the sword of the conquered Palmer by the

point, presented it to her very gallantly upon our knees. As she put out her pretty white hand to receive it, her lovely eyes beamed with the clearest gratitude; and the good old gentleman gazed upon us with equal benignity, muttering, every now and then, "Brave boys! generous boys! noble boys!" Nay, the whole assembly actually began to ejaculate, "The Lord in heaven bless them!" Dick and I were quite abashed, and out of countenance. To say the truth, we had never heard ourselves so much praised before.

The words brave, generous and noble, made our ears burn and tingle so, that we were loath to give them safe conduct to the seat of vanity. Two minutes further stay in the garden, would unquestionably have made our confusion complete; but when the sweet young lady had taken the sword from us, we started immediately upon our feet—bowed modestly to her, and the venerable gentleman by her side—rushed by the inglorious captive—and, to hinder

a waste of unmerited thanks, (for we were conscious of having only performed an act of common humanity) made a dexterous bound at the wall—sharply gained its top—leaped down into the meadow—joined our impatient companion—gathered up the scattered fishing-tackle—and walked quickly home, with hearts just as light as feathers.

CHAP. XI.

*Which brings the First Volume of my
History to a Conclusion.*

By this time, maugre and in spite of my playful disposition, I had made tolerable progress in the Greek and Latin classics, the mathematics, and several other branches of sound and healthful literature. Every second or third evening, Mr. Prosody gave me a lesson on the violin ; so that I was in the end, by the aid of a good ear, a very masterly player, which rejoiced him almost above measure. I will not vouch for the infallibility of the observation I am about to make, but if it be allowable to judge from a train of well-known instances, it certainly is not altogether an absurd one. If a fiddle, flute, or an other musical instrument, be abruptly put in the hand of a boy, while he is pursuing the studies that are *intended* to rub off the rust of his mind, he will

grow less sedulous, and as soon as he can manage a few tweedledum tunes, the chief part of his thoughts will be directed towards his new play-thing. In a little time, if he be not restrained, he will let his fondness for it run on so far, that he will become emulous, and turn tail to his books in downright earnest. But it was not so with me : for although I liked music well enough, I did not give my mind so entirely to it, as to forget that I had something of a more *rational* nature to attend to. It is very well in its place ; that is to say, to stir up life in a company of young people, or to pass on an idle hour ; but when it is made into a perfect hobby-horse, (as is often the case) or a means, unless through pure necessity, of procuring bread, the name and dignity of man receive an effeminate wanness, and are blemished with a spot of disgraceful indolence.

In this place, reader, (for I do not think I can find a more suitable one) I

shall make free, whether thou feelst inclined or not, to let thee know in what sort of posture my relations and old friends now stood. Those two patterns of conjugal affection, my good parents, still resided in a happy and genteel manner at Lisbon. An incessant correspondence was kept up between them and Mr. Prosody, to whom they shewed every mark of friendly respect, and the most convincing testimonies of their gratitude. In all the letters he received from them, a thousand tender enquiries were made about their little Godfrey, as they called me; and the favourable accounts they received back from him, gave them cause to say, that they doubted not but I should be a comfort to them in their old age. God help them! they little knew what an unlucky hare-brained rascal I then was.

They had not left England more than two years, when my mother was brought to bed a second time; but the child, which was a boy, gave up the ghost in a few

hours after its entrance into the world. The loss, however, in the course of fourteen months or so, was made up, by the birth of a fine lusty girl, who now lives—a shining ornament to female virtue. From a brother, this panegyric, which is the least I can bestow on her, for she is all worthiness, may probably be looked upon by the man who knows not the value of a good sister, as interested, and consequently, unbecoming; but to him whose feelings are not blinded with the thick smoke of custom, or kept under controul, for fear he should be thought a woman, it will appear quite in a different light.

My grandfather Ranger, who still persevered in his shameful and unheard-of barbarity, had left his estate in Cheshire to the care and management of a gentleman of the name of Creville, and taken up his abode at a place near Bath, where he was laid up of that excruciating and truly dreadful disease the stone. He took along with him his cousin, Mr. Maximilian

Steril, to whom, it was whispered, he had as good as promised to bequeath the entire substance of his effects. As for the worthy old curate, my grandfather Stanhope, Mr. Prosody, by the interest of some gentlemen of rank, obtained for him the post of tutor, in the family of an Irish peer at Dublin, which made his declining life in some degree easy and comfortable.

My religious fosterdam, Mrs. Racy, who seemed resolved to end her days in the old village, came very often to see me, and shewed at every visit fresh and undeniable proofs of her affection and regard. It was from her I learnt, that those two united and incorrigible madcaps, Ned Marsh and Tom Prow, from being the shame of their friends, and torment of the neighbouring farmers, became, in process of time, the avowed terror of the whole country: and that their mischievous projects were so repeatedly crowned with success, that they at last feared no colours, but went as boldly to work, as if

they had had a regiment of soldiers to protect them. Neither house, barn, stable, orchard, or garden, was safe, though the doors of each were fastened with locks, bolts, padlocks, bars, and double-bolts. They made nothing of scaling a wall four or five yards high: and whenever they took it into their heads to frighten a family in the night, they would sometimes, at the hazard of their lives, climb to the top of the house, and cast squibs and crackers down the chimney. At others, they would saunter about the fields till they met with a heavy cart-horse, which they would immediately catch—lead by the mane into the village—and tie, by the hairs of its tail, to the knocker of the destined door. This done, they would prick the poor animal in the flank with a goad, till he either burst open the door by kicking violently against it, or set himself at liberty by wincing. In this blameworthy, though laughable way did they go on. However, as justice often shews her face unexpectedly, they were, at length,

seized, in the act of robbing a hen-roost, and carried before a magistrate, who, in consideration of their unripe years, would readily have dismissed them; but no one stepping forward to speak a word in their favour, not even a soul of their own relations, and they being unable to give a tolerable account of themselves, he conjectured they were two abandoned outcasts; in consequence of which supposition, he found them lodgings on board a tender, which sailed within a few weeks for the West Indies.

Here, my good reader, I guess thou wilt either shake thy head, in a fit of waggishness, and utter, though without a particle of spite, "You may be very thankful, Mr. Goosecap, that Fortune stood your friend, and snatched you away from those two wrong-headed geniuses when she did; for had you been linked with them a few years longer, by my soul, you would have tripped into Lob's-pound too!" Or exclaim, with a surly voice,

contemptuous pout, and contracted brow, "Fire my conscience, if many an honest lad has not swung upon a gallows-tree."

As I cannot put on a face to kick against expressions that are fortified with sound truth, so neither can I conscientiously, or with reasonable propriety, offer a single word in extenuation of even my early faults; which were, no doubt, (allowing sufficient pity for my age and inexperience) highly reproachable. But, prithee, let us now strike into the main road again.

The time that destiny had decreed for me to enter the wide and boundless world in *propria persona*, drew very near. The affairs of the unequalled Mr. Prosody, to my great sorrow, began to make an extremely diminutive and gloomy appearance. His school dwindled apace. The little farm in Staffordshire was now his principal dependance. 'Tis true, my father, as soon as he had received his first

year's salary from his employers, very gratefully remitted to him a bill of two hundred pounds, declaring, that it was his intention to supply him with the like sum annually, as a trifling compensation for his generous services, and the trouble and expence he was at in bringing me up. But this noble-hearted man, this paragon of friendship and benevolence, immediately sent him the money back, with a reply of this import:—That if he offered him such a monstrous affront again, he should, without fail, take it in dudgeon. So my father's hands were of course ever after tied upon his back.

The good old pedagogue might really have done something unworthy his profession; for so rapidly did the wavering goddess flee from him, that, within the short space of five months, he lost all his boarders, and near three fourths of his day scholars. The first boarder that quitted him, was Jack Meanwell, whose friends thought he had received schooling

enough for the business they intended to put him to, which was that of a druggist. The second was that haughty and self-sufficient personage, Lord George Oswald Bubble, who was ordered home purposely to be lessoned in the debaucheries of fashionable life. The third was the listless Drowsy, who was taken away, because his father, who, I am told, was a far-seeing man, discovered the folly of continuing to spend his money upon an unamendable blockhead. The fourth was 'squire Purse-ly, that honest creature who was so exceedingly fond of fingering other people's property. His father carried him straight to Oxford, and got him matriculated in J— College, where he was to be disciplined for the pulpit. The fifth and last was my trusty companion, and ever affectionate friend, Dick Lash, whose father, having contracted a habit of dram-drinking, had reduced himself to such very great straits, that he could not possibly support him at school any longer.

Never could two youthful associates have parted with greater sorrow and reluctance, than Dick and I did. We were, in fact, almost broken-hearted; and when we gave each other the last shake by the hand, emotion would not allow either of us to pronounce "good b'ye." As a memorial of his friendship, or, to use a more familiar term, as a keepsake, Lash presented me with a pair of green silk garters of very curious workmanship; and I, in return, slipped into his hand a remarkable crown-piece, which Mr. Prosody had given to me for a little pocket-money. Thus was I at once bereft of an agreeable friend, and lively play-fellow.

A week, the short period of a week, had not passed away, before I felt the thorough extent of my loss. I had now the mortification to think, that when my day's task was made an end of, I had nothing to amuse myself with but the fiddle and my own vague reflections. What would I not have given, to have seen poor

Dick at my elbow again ? Whilst I had him to play and converse with, I was as active and frolicsome as a squirrel ; but how quickly was the fire quenched, when I was deprived of his company ! I grew all at once as dronish as a dormouse, and as duncely as if my poll had been touched with a torpedo. In truth, I hardly knew what to do with myself. Holidays, and the hours that were each day set apart for the cessation of study, hung insupportably heavy on my hands. I found little comfort in staying in the house, and less in walking abroad. Every place was alike to me : all things seemed to wear a thick gloom : and even sleep, the best assuager of chagrin, frequently denied me his consolation.

Mr. Prosody, in proportion as his circumstances drooped, became sorrowfully thoughtful ; yet, to do that worthy man justice, I never heard an expression that had the least tendency to a murmur, escape his lips. I could not but be sensi-

ble that I should in a very short time be extremely burdensome to him; conscience, therefore, bade me think about shifting for myself. I was every day more and more uncomfortable. I had heard of pennyless people's trying their fortunes in the world, and why could not I do the same? I nourished this little precarious thought, till I had brought it to a firm resolve. I longed for an opportunity to hint my intention to Mr. Prosody. A very good one at last offered itself, which I grasped as eagerly as if my life had absolutely depended upon it. One night, about two months after the departure of Lash, he sent for me to kill an hour with him in the parlour. Presenting me with a cup of beer, he said, "Come, child, drink prosperity and long life to your good parents!" Having complied with his wish, he took suddenly hold of my hand, which he fervently squeeze, and regarding me with a look of the warmest affection, spoke, in an audible voice, to this effect.

“ There are many discontented beings in the world, my Godfrey, who are continually finding fault with the dispensations of providence, and repining at every trivial disaster that befalls them. How ill does that man deserve the mercies of his all-wise Maker, who spends his time, though he have it in his power to be completely happy, in murmurs and complaints. The severest rubs and calamities in life, are far from being insurmountable. A patient mind will await their approach with cool intrepidity, and break through them with resolute fortitude. Affluence is by no means the wish of a wise and virtuous man: if he possess what will purchase him the common necessities of life, he is thankful; if not, he scorns to rail at his stars, but, on the contrary, looks forward with modest hope. You, perhaps, may remember what Claudian says,

*Vivitur exiguo melius; natura beatiss
Omnibus esse dedit, si quis cognoverit uti.*

and Martial,

Fortuna multis nimium dedit, nulli satis.

Both these passages contain a positive and incontestible truth. We generally long for those things of which we neither know the real value nor the real use. Most men desire money to gratify some flimsy caprice that hath taken hold of them, not to do good with. Every human creature is more apt to gratify his own wants, than those of his brethren. I have known men of the purest morals, to possess such a large fund of selfishness, that they have studied their own accommodation and ease to a nicety. The holy Scriptures note to us, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves: what heed we pay to this divine admonition, you probably know as well as I can tell you."

After a short pause, he proceeded thus: "The Almighty never withdraws his favours from any of his people but for some wise and good end. So well assured am I of his justice, his clemency, and wisdom, that I daily behold the decay of my school

without pain, or any particular uneasiness of mind. It hath pleased him, in his infinite goodness, to reserve for me the little family-estate in Staffordshire, where I hope to spend the remainder of my life. You shall accompany me, child; there will be plenty of employment for you, you need not fear; for you know what Virgil says in his second Georgic,

—*Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem;*

Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

What say you, child? Would you not like to be a farmer?"

"I shall be always ready, sir," said I, catching at these last words, "to obey your will in every thing; but, by your permission, I will try to do something for myself; for I am sure, sir, you cannot support me much longer without putting yourself to many great inconveniences."

"Mention not that, my dear child!" cried he, looking tenderly upon me, "we shall manage very well, I promise you. But what do you mean by saying, that you

will try to do something for yourself?" "I mean, sir," answered I, blushing, "that, by your leave. I will try my luck in the world." "In the world?" cried he, starting with surprise, "in what part of the world, pray?" "In any part, sir," returned I, very sheepishly. "Adso, Godfrey," cried he, shaking his head, "this is a strange thought of yours! I am afraid you have been suffering your mind to build a few vaporous castles." "No, indeed, sir," answered I, "I assure you, I have promised myself the enjoyment of no more than what every decent person has a right to expect,—a respectable employment." "Ah, child!" said he, "a good situation is not so easily obtained as you imagine. An application from a stranger is seldom or never regarded: if he be dressed in mean and homely apparel, he is sometimes thought a vagabond; if in genteel, a licentious rake, or prodigal knave. He who thinks of entering the world with no other attendant but poverty, ought to provide his

patience with a case as hard and inflexible as a cuirassier's armour, to repel the galling bullets of insult. You are at present, my Godfrey, unfit to be entirely your own counsellor; therefore, I pray you, in this respect, be ruled by me." "Surely, sir," cried I, I am old enough to know the difference between right and wrong!" "Well, but my dear boy," said he, smiling, "you should consider the matter thoroughly before you come to a determination." "That I have already done, sir," cried I; "Indeed, I have spent very near ten thousand thoughts upon it." "No small number," cried he; "but peradventure they were all biassed ones. You ought to weigh things in the clean scales of prudent reason. Besides, what would your worthy father and mother think of me, if I were to suffer you to quit me without a prospect?" "Perhaps, sir," replied I, in a spirited manner, "they would rather their son were a wandering beggar, than an obscure cipher. But if it be your will, my dear master!

(added I, checking my young blood) I will stay contentedly with you for ever." "God bless you, child!" cried he, tenderly embracing me, "I would not, on any account, desire you to do that. An active life is indubitably preferable to a slothful one. I do not admonish you for wishing to make yourself of some consequence in society, but for your keenness of expectation. To a sanguine person, the smallest disappointment is a weighty misfortune; for he usually goes headlong to work, and thinks of nothing but the harvest of his labour. How frequently have we heard of a rash army's being routed by a handful of cool men? But what sort of a situation would you like, child?" "I have no particular choice, sir," answered I, with some earnestness.

After about five minutes' meditation, he smote his forehead with his hand, and cried, "Adso, I will see what I can do for you. I know two gentlemen, residents of Northampton, who, I dare say, would

be very willing to serve any person of my recommendation. The one is an attorney, and the other a liquor-merchant. I will write to them at all events: and if you think the journey will not be too long for you, child, you may carry the letters yourself. As you have never been much from home, it will be a little recreation for you. They are remarkable friendly men, and I do not doubt but you will receive very kind treatment from them."

I embraced this proposal with a great deal of joy; and bowing respectfully to him who was ready at all times, and on all occasions, to help a fellow-creature, left the parlour, and retired to rest.

It was on the evening of the second of October, 1797, that the above conversation took place, and the morning of the tenth was appointed by Mr. Prosody for the time of my elongation.

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